PIG IRON

CHARLES G. NORRIS

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By CHARLES G. NORRIS

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"Brass," "Bread," etc.

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To

FRANK NORRIS

My dear Mouse:

Some twenty years ago your uncle dedicated a book to me,—one of the things which, as you know, has given me the greatest pride and pleasure. So on this page I now place the name you share with him, in the hope you also will be glad to share the dedication.

DAD.

PIG IRON

PIG IRON: A casting run directly from the smelting furnace into troughlike molds.

—*Webster's Dictionary.*

PIG IRON

CHAPTER I

§ 1

THE news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox reached the little Massachusetts town of Mendon almost at the very hour of Sam Smith's birth. The baby's father, gray-featured and gray-bearded Theophilus Smith, who had given two sons to the Union cause, took his wife's hand in his as he knelt beside the bed, and gently patting it, told her the glad tidings in a voice that slightly trembled.

"James lies at Shiloh and Lawrence at Andersonville, but right has triumphed, my dear. The Union is to be preserved and our boys have not given their young lives in vain. God in His infinite goodness has seen fit in this hour of victory to send us another son to take the place of one of those we've lost."

"Is it a boy, Thee?" his wife asked weakly.

"Yes, Mary my dear,—a splendid boy. Mrs. Bell has him, —is giving him his first bath; she'll have him here directly. A fine boy, isn't he, Adam?" he finished, addressing the doctor who had quitted the mother for a moment to inspect the child and was now reentering the room.

"A baby any woman might well be proud of, Mrs. Smith. I have to congratulate you on a beautiful son."

"Then he's to be 'Samuel,' " said the woman in the bed with a tender smile. "My 'Samuel' and yours, too, Thee—for he was 'Asked of God.' "

"Just as you like, Mary. You've made another gallant fight and brought another sturdy soul into the world. You deserve a fine son to look after you as the years come on, and you shall call him what you will. 'Samuel' is an honored name.

It's not so much what a man is called at birth as what he makes of his name in after-life; isn't that so, Adam?"

"And I thought," continued Mary Smith, her eyes now on her husband and now upon the physician's face, "I'd use 'Osgood' again as a middle name. It was Jim's, you know, doctor,—after my mother. I couldn't have another 'Jim'; never a child of mine with his name or Lawrence's. But I like 'Osgood.' The Osgoods came over with Oglethorpe in 1733, doctor, and my mother was the last of the direct line. We're Americans on both sides right down from Colonial days,—aren't we, Thee?"

"Yes; you know my people came from New England, Adam. My grandparents lived at Concord and my grandfather was one of the 'Minute Men.' We didn't move to South Carolina until I was a tad."

"I thought I'd call the baby 'Samuel Osgood Smith'; don't you think that sounds pretty?"

The man on one knee beside the bed rose ponderously and his gray eyes twinkled a little as he pressed his wife's thin hand,—a hand knuckled and veined from years of housework.

"She all right?" he demanded with some sharpness of the doctor.

"Splendid—splendid; there's no woman among my patients who better knows how to bring children into the world than Mrs. Smith. She never gives her doctor or her baby the slightest trouble. . . . There now," he said, bending over the bed.

Theophilus Smith turned toward the door but at that moment it was opened by Mrs. Bell; in her arms she carried a bundle wrapped in a blanket.

"Look here," she said proudly. Loosening a corner of the roll and poking a fold to one side, she displayed the weazened red putty face of the baby.

The father peered, wrinkling up his own face in amused imitation of his offspring's.

"Samuel Osgood Smith," he pronounced. "Well, sir, it's something of a name for so small a thing." He studied his son's physiognomy a moment, considering. "I wonder what he'll make of it," he said reflectively.

"I want my baby," came somewhat fretfully from the bed. "I want my little Sam."

Theophilus Smith patted the blanket and went on into the

narrow passage. Heavily he descended the creaking wooden stairs and groped his way through the dark hall toward the kitchen door.

There was a great roaring fire in the kitchen, and Cora, the old negress the Smiths had brought with them from South Carolina, was there heating water on the stove in several mammoth containers. Julia and Narcissa, the two little girls, were playing with their rag dolls on the cheese chest.

They turned expectantly toward their father as his large frame filled the doorway.

"It's a boy," he announced.

"Praise de good Lawd!" shouted old Cora. "Ah jest said all along it was goin' to be a boy."

Julia stared in her usual stolid fashion, but Narcissa shrieked in delight, rushed upon her father and flung her arms about his legs. He picked her up and kissed her smooth baby cheek.

"A boy 'at I c'n play wif?" she demanded.

"Where's Jonathan?" her father asked. "Where's your brother?"

Narcissa dug her fingers into her father's curling beard and tugged vigorously.

"I think he's out after the cows," Julia answered. "David came after him. They broke out of the stony pasture."

"C'n I 'av my baby bruvver?" Narcissa queried insistently, jerking her father's beard.

"De Widow Cook-Taft an' Mis' Harrison 're settin' in de parlor," Cora announced. "Dey been settin' dare for most an hour waitin' for news."

"I'll see them directly. If Jonathan returns, tell him I want him at once."

Theophilus Smith left the room with the intention of quickly ridding the house of the two waiting ladies, but as he passed the door of the dining-room he hesitated a moment, then entered, and unlocking a lower compartment of the old walnut cupboard, drew out a round earthenware jug. Screwing the cork out carefully, he sniffed its contents and poured himself a tumblerful. It was hard cider, fragrant of his own apples, last year's fermentation. Raising the glass to the light, he observed its cloudy amber coloring with satisfaction.

"It's been a great day," he said aloud. "A great day for the Union and for me. . . . God bless us all."

He inhaled the fragrance of his drink again, and slowly

drained it. Then wiping his lips with the back of his hand, he replaced the demijohn in the cupboard, locked the door, and went toward the parlor.

§ 2

There was a large, baronial air about Theophilus Smith. A vigorous man, a lawyer by early training, he was something of a scholar with a very real love of English poetry and the classics. The Latin of Cato, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius rolled from his lips and there was ever ready on his tongue an apt quotation from Shakespeare, Milton, or his great favorite, Pope. In the early years of his married life he had conducted a Young Ladies' Seminary at Charleston, South Carolina. The venture had never been wholly successful and when the Massachusetts farm at Mendon had unexpectedly become his through the death of a distant relative, he had been persuaded by his brother, Cyrus, who had never left his native state and who had made a profitable living off a farm at Taunton, to give up schooling, come North, and try his fortune at agriculture.

Mendon had seemed to hold the promise of improved circumstances for Theophilus Smith and his family. Already there were four children. In addition to the larger income that was frankly necessary, the man foresaw that his two elder sons would shortly present a problem as part of the entourage of a Young Ladies' Seminary. On the other hand, in four or five years they might prove to be of happy assistance on a farm, living at the same time a healthy life.

A brief inspection of his heritage encouraged Theophilus into believing the move advantageous. The farm was not large,—it consisted of less than forty acres,—but it possessed a full-bearing apple orchard and several fields of what looked like fertile land. There were a soundly built house and barn, several smaller outhouses, and a cottage at the further end of the orchard for a hired man and his family. The main house, unfortunately, was far from being large enough for the requirements of the new owner; it contained only four bedrooms, parlor, dining-room, and kitchen. However, it could be made to do for a time; in a year or two, he decided, an addition could be built.

So the migration had been decided upon and within a year

accomplished, but almost from the very first a fear began to pursue Theophilus that it was to prove a mistake.

First of all, his wife, Mary,—a woman of capacity, of sweet and uncomplaining nature, adaptable and gentle, an excellent housekeeper and mother,—could not bring herself to look upon the rugged aspects of her new home with its northern chill and bitter winds, with anything but alien eyes. She was used to the South, used to its graciousness and languor, accustomed in the management of her household to slaves who were ever cheerfully ready to carry out her wishes. The hired girls of the North were "white trash" to her, and had it not been for faithful old Cora, who, although she had been given her freedom years before, refused to leave her beloved mistress, Theophilus Smith doubted whether his wife would have survived the first bitter New England winter. Mary Smith never referred to her new surroundings except as "this country," said contemptuously and accompanied with a disdainful fillip of fingers.

Another reason for these forebodings was the suspicion which at times greatly distressed him, that he, himself, lacked the qualifications necessary to become a successful farmer. Cyrus, on whose advice and guidance he had confidently relied, in less than six months after the arrival North of the family from Charleston, sold his own farm and moved with his wife to New York where he presently wrote he had established himself in the "hay and feed" business. Theophilus resented with a good deal of feeling what he considered to be Cyrus's desertion, but pride was one of the strongest elements of his nature, and nothing could persuade him to admit even to his family, much less to his brother, that he had more or less counted on Cyrus's counsel in chancing so radical a change in his fortunes. As a result, there arose a coldness between the two which increased rather than lessened with the years.

Theophilus knew himself at heart to be no farmer. In picturing his New England life from his Charleston schoolroom, he had seen himself riding his horse about his fields, booted and spurred, superintending the work, directing operations, much as he had observed Southern gentlemen in South Carolina overseeing the Negroes in the cotton fields. There was no such life possible for him at Mendon. Grubbing in the soil alone produced results, and he feared himself fundamentally unfit for such work.

He watched his neighbors, tried to ape their methods, and to adapt himself to their ways. But he had spent the best part of his life teaching young girls poetry and the classics, and the change came hard. His oldest son, Jim,—sixteen when the move North took place,—a vigorous, stalwart, steady boy,—had put into his father's heart the only hopes he dared entertain during the first years at Mendon that the farming venture might eventually prove a success. Lawrence, too, though only thirteen, promised a pair of capable hands when he was older. Were it not for the assistance of his two sons, Theophilus soon realized the New England experiment must fail dismally. It was the war,—the brutal, cruel war,—that brought this home to him, the war that less than three years later took the first of his sons from his home,—a boy just nineteen, the apple of his eye, and sent a bullet through his brain at Shiloh, and, within a year, the second,—sixteen, eager, impetuous, filled with all the vigor and ardor of youth,—by starvation and disease in Andersonville Prison.

Ardently believing in the justice of slavery itself, Theophilus Smith had with equal fervor opposed the disruption of the Union. A northerner by birth, a southerner by many years' residence, dissensions and controversies had beset him for nearly forty years of his life. He had grown heartily weary of them; his ears ached with the reiteration of all the familiar arguments.

They were settled once and for all, he said to himself with a fervent "Thank God!" on the morning of his youngest son's birth; Lincoln had triumphed and the new baby's country when he grew up and became a man, would be an undivided one, reaching from ocean to ocean, and from the Gulf to the Lakes.

§ 3

The forty acres at Mendon were the scene of one pitiable mistake after another, some of them unavoidable, a great many more due to ignorance and blundering. There were four children left,—Jonathan, aged twelve, who had a twisted hip from hip-disease since babyhood, and who teetered awkwardly when he walked,—Julia, a self-contained, silent little girl of ten,—ebullient Narcissa, who was three,—and the new baby. And there was also Mary Smith, the wife and mother, patient and

good, hard-working and devoted. Hating the unfriendly climate though she did, holding in frank disdain her northern neighbors, and ridiculing, whenever an opportunity presented, Mendon aspects and Mendon ways, she nevertheless brought to bear what appeared to be enthusiasm and certainly an unquestionable energy to the management of her household. Her husband had no fault to find with Mary. "A good wife and a good mother," he often said of her.

Somehow a living for them all must be wrung from the soil. It was too late to think of a new undertaking. Theophilus was far from despairing, believing still the farm could be made to pay. He had learned many bitter lessons in the past six years, lessons he determined each time to turn to the future's good account. David, the hired man, who had come along the dusty road one summer day, a year or two before, asking for work, and who seemed to have been guided to the Smith farm by an all-seeing and merciful Providence, had proven a tower of strength.

David was gnarled and taciturn, but he had the capacity for working twelve, sometimes fourteen hours a day. He never protested, never grumbled, was never sick or intemperate, never shirked or forgot a chore, and lived in a lair of dingy rags and dirt in the tenant cottage at the other end of the farm. David was an integral part of all their lives, now, as much a fixture among them as Cora. There was nothing that David ever showed an unwillingness to do, or proved incapable of doing; he was never particularly gracious about requests, but graciousness was not one of his characteristics. It was his firm and unquestioning faith in the farm which put heart into Theophilus. David always believed in next year's apples; the corn and barley crop would be a banner one; there was invariably a sound reason ready on his tongue why the last one and the ones before it had not been as good as they should. His master believed him; he was only too anxious to believe him. Considering every circumstance, weighing all possibilities, there was no real reason why the farm should not prove a comfortable source of income.

§ 4

It was a chance conversation between his father and David that the baby, Sam, first remembered. It was a hot June

morning, a few weeks past his third birthday, and he was lying sprawled across Julia's lap, as she sat just outside the doorway of the farmhouse, busily braiding straw. In after years whenever Sam thought of his older sister, he always mentally saw her braiding straw; she was ever at it, fingers flying. The incident which made an impression upon his waking consciousness was trifling. His father appeared suddenly from the house and stood a moment searching the fields and orchard with a quick look, then shouted for David, and when the latter appeared, materializing, as he always seemed to do, from the very ground beneath one's feet, the talk, Sam remembered, took place. Presently they started walking toward the barn, and the baby burst into loud protests. At the moment a great longing possessed him; he wanted to go with his father. It was Julia's unsympathetic and curt refusal, her funny words in explanation that stuck in his mind:

"No, Sammy, you can't go; Pa's busy; Jock's sprung a tendon."

"Jock's sprung a tendon!" The phrase never left him. It came back when he was an old man, his hair white. "Jock's sprung a tendon!" For a long time he puzzled over it, and many a night as he lay in his bed next his mother's, while she was trying to sing him to sleep, his thoughts would return to it and he would wonder about its meaning. He had no recollection of the moment of enlightenment, but after a time he became aware that one of the farm's horses was named "Jock," and that all horses had tendons and when these became sprung, it was a misfortune.

Along with the scene and Julia's mystifying words, there were other things upon this occasion which left their imprint upon his mind. He could recall how green the trees looked that day, how blue the sky was, how sharply silhouetted the soaring birds seemed against the azure background, and how, far below where the hill dipped into the valley, the smoke and roof-tops of Milford appeared. The world that day was exceptionally beautiful, its sunshine warm and friendly.

Other early impressions were less vivid. He remembered being perched beside Jonathan on the jouncing seat of the hay wagon, and a long drive which had begun delightfully and had ended in great misery for he had been fiercely shaken and every muscle and bone in his small anatomy set to aching. Then a day when Julia had taken him to school with her,

carrying him part of the way, dragging him the rest, urging him to hurry as she grasped his hand and he toddled in the ruts of the road beside her. That, too, had commenced propitiously, and finished in disaster, for after he had been at school about an hour, the bench on which he was sitting grew unendurably hard and a great homesickness overcame him. He had begun to whimper and presently to wail so bitterly that his humiliated sister had been directed by the teacher to take him home. There was an occasion, also, when he had been laid flat on the kitchen table, a stretch of dark cloth beneath him, while his mother and Cora, after many opinions and exchanges,—an interminable discussion it seemed to him,—had cut the material about his legs and waist, and had made from it his first pair of small trousers. It was on this same table that Julia and Narcissa were placed while Cora basted the stiffly starched pantalets to their drawers before they went to a party or accompanied their mother to church.

Almost all of the pleasantest recollections during the early years of his life were associated with the younger of his two sisters,—"Narciss," as she was called by the family,—a mischievous, eager, high-spirited child, always in trouble and always a delight to her brother. She and Julia, as little girls, had acquired an astonishing collection of rag dolls known as "baby-chinks." These were diminutive-sized puppets about six inches long made of tightly rolled strips of cloth. Those representing males were split to the middle and the two halves thus made sewed into legs. Arms were manufactured by attaching a narrower rolled strip crosswise one inch from the opposite end. Eyes, nose, and mouth were indicated by a careful pen, red ink sometimes adding a realistic touch to a favorite's lips. The dressing of the baby-chinks was the main affair in the matter of their creation, and some of the costumes evolved were both effective and ingenious. Mrs. Smith and Cora occasionally lent an assisting hand, but most of the work was Julia's and Narcissa's own.

Playing with baby-chinks was by far the most absorbing diversion of the three younger Smith children. Sometimes even Jonathan consented to be entertained with them. The children's mother and Cora frequently were amused listeners to the extravagantly fantastic stories that were woven about the various personalities with which these dressed rags were endowed. Theophilus Smith, with a tolerant half-smile, occa-

sionally studied his offspring at their play, and characterized their unintellectual amusement as "thimble-headed bobism."

Sam's childhood was on the whole a happy one. There was deep snow in winter with sledding, snowballing and sleigh-rides. It was biting cold at times, and fingers, toes, and ears had to be rubbed vigorously with snow on coming indoors to save them from frost-bite. Once or twice each winter, the Smith household was snowed in, and these were always occasions for fun and excitement. Then there were the hot summers, deliciously warm and beguiling, when one could go all day long without shoes and scuffle one's feet in the soft road dust. When the apple trees were in full leaf, there was a special diversion in exploring their branches and discovering perches among them where one could be completely hidden from view. And there was always the excitement each year during the plowing, of following his father with the team, and collecting the baby field-mice the plowshare unearthed. Certain pictures of these early years were photographed upon Sam's mind: his sisters pulling off their sunbonnets as soon as they were out of sight of the house, and there was no longer danger of their mother seeing them; Jonathan limping after the cows and calling: "So—boss, so—boss"; his father leaning on the stone wall that edged the field beside the road, debating politics in his stentorian voice with a neighbor who had stopped his buggy to exchange views; David lifting the cheese chest in the kitchen a brief moment to allow the cat, who had been watching patiently for hours, to dart underneath and secure a too-confident mouse; Cora busy at her ironing, thumping the board with a kind of rhythm, the sweat dropping from her black brow and hissing on the hot implement in her hand; his mother seated at the melodeon in the parlor, singing in her sweet quavering voice:

When all Thy mercies, O my God,——

Every night until he was past his tenth year, his mother came upstairs after he was in bed and sang him to sleep. She always sang her children to sleep. She had begun with Jim, more than twenty years before, and Lawrence, Jonathan, Julia, and Narcissa had all drifted off to slumber to the sound of her sweet voice. It was a ritual with her. She never varied the songs; she wanted her children to have the same tradition

in regard to them. The outstanding one among them was the hymn "Beautiful Zion" or "Booful Zion" as it was called by the Smith children.

> Beautiful Zion, built above,
> Beautiful Zion that I love——

His mother was a kindly, patient woman, but even as a very small boy he realized she was not a happy one. There was always an air of gentle sorrow about her. She still felt the call of the South, New England chilled and frightened her, she longed and grieved for her dead sons. Besides, there was ever present a worry for Julia and Narcissa. What did the future hold for her girls? Were they to have no better chance in life than to be farmers' wives in a cold, unfriendly country, working from morning to night, raising children, struggling forever against poverty? For herself she didn't care,—but for them? Ah, that was different. Someway they must have their chance.

Once a month,—twice a week during harvest time,—Theophilus Smith harnessed Jock or Jerry to the wobbly old surrey, or took the farm wagon if there was sufficient load, and drove over to Framingham to sell his produce and bring home supplies. His dealings there with Ezra Hornpipe, who conducted the General Store, were always a matter of credit or debit. No money changed hands. Sam could not recall ever having seen a coin of any description on the farm until he was fourteen or fifteen years old. Hornpipe took what the farmer brought him, put a fair valuation on it, and set the amount down as a credit in his books. Against this, Theophilus drew flour, salt, sugar, groceries of every description as they were needed, bolts of muslin, shoes, cloth, gloves, hats, bran for the cows, harness for the horses, implements for the farm.

There was nothing that Ezra Hornpipe could not furnish, or could not procure within a day or two. He was an honest tradesman, and he dealt fairly with his customers, giving value for value received. But there was always a debit balance under the name of Theophilus Smith in Ezra's book which the amount in the opposite column never quite equalled. In fact, the figure on the debit side steadily grew larger and larger, and during the last year of the war, it had been necessary to arrange a mortgage on the Mendon farm

and hand the paper over to Ezra in order to wipe out the swollen figure. But times were going to be better now that peace had come. All the farmers in the countryside were agreed on that, and the Boston papers were full of bright promises for the future. Prices for farm produce were rising, good years were ahead, and it was understood between Smith and Hornpipe that the latter was to hand back the paper which gave him right and title to part of the Mendon farm, whenever Theophilus was able to repay the borrowed amount.

Mary Smith used to dread the days which took her husband to Framingham. He met friends in Ezra's back room,—farmers from all the country round about,—traveling salesmen, peddlers, loiterers. Politics of the nation, state and county were discussed, the bottle was passed from hand to hand and health and good luck freely drunk. His wife was never able to accuse Theophilus of coming home intoxicated, or even half-way so, but he would return in an elated and festive mood, happy and noisy, liking to give freedom to his deep voice, roaring his words, cracking jokes. The children enjoyed his horse-play immensely; but his wife would fidget as the afternoon wore on, would cast anxious looks down the road, and when he was back safe and sound, would sit primly in her chair with folded hands and downcast eyes, silently disapproving.

There was much excitement during the distribution of packages following the father's return and sometimes, though not often, unexpected gifts. It was Smith's custom to make something of a ceremony about the parceling out of his purchases. He would bring the bundles in from the back of the surrey in great armfuls and pile them on the kitchen table. The family grouped itself around, Cora in the corner by the cheese chest, David standing in the doorway. When everything had been arranged, the sorting and allotting took place.

"Now let me see," Theophilus would begin with much deep clearing of throat; "what have we here?" He would investigate a bundle by tearing a hole in the wrappings with a large forefinger. "Ah, yes, this is yours, my dear Mary,—the lamp wicks you asked for. Here is Cora's clothes-rope. And this is,—let me see,—this is Jonathan's shoes,—soles, my dear son," he would interrupt himself to say with mock impressiveness, gently patting their bottoms, "in which the devil has no interest. . . . And here is your bran and salt-lick,

David, and the soldering iron; the new scythe I left in the surrey. Julia, your calico; Narcissa, this is yours; here is a little warm coat of many colors for the young hopeful The brown yarn Ezra couldn't match exactly, but you may be sure we did the best we could;—and here is percale,—nine and a half yards of the finest cotton fabric that ever graced Hornpipe's shelves. This, the toweling, the soda, Julia's stockings, the corn-starch . . ."

So it would be continued with many interspersed comments, interruptions, and giggling laughter from the girls, until all was completed. At the end, Theophilus would have a little joke for his wife. When the last package had been distributed, he would produce one more from his pocket.

"And this," he would say with a sly wink at his audience, laying his finger along one side of his nose, "is a little bottle of Jamaica rum for the old lady!"

The girls always tittered at this, and there was a general smirk; it was expected by them all. Mrs. Smith never used stimulants of any kind and it was well known she was strongly prejudiced against them, but she never failed to bridle at her husband's jest.

"Fie!" she would exclaim. "I never touch the horrid stuff, and well you know it! . . . Mind the children, Thee! . . . What kind of a creature do you imagine they'll think their mother with such goings on!"

There invariably would be much more of this, usually stilled by a general laugh and some of the children's kisses, but Mrs. Smith could never take her husband's joke lightly.

§ 5

When he was seven years old, Sam started to attend the village school, two and a half miles from the farm. During the fall and spring months, he and Narcissa walked this distance, morning and afternoon, taking cold lunches which Cora put up for them. He could remember how good these seemed to him when at the noon hour he opened the lid of the basket, turned back the red-fringed napkin and inspected the contents. Cora never forgot anything, and frequently there was a surprise. In winter time Jonathan usually drove them over in the sleigh. He was a boy of nineteen at that time, Julia two years younger, and Narcissa ten.

It was one morning upon his return trip after driving the children to school, that Jonathan suddenly and terribly met his death. A tree branch, heavily laden with snow, projecting over the road, without warning, snapped, precipitating its burden upon the passing vehicle. The horses bolted straight across the road into the woods, the sleigh upset, and the unfortunate boy, in some way entangled with the robe, reins or runners, was dragged to an unsightly and frightful end. They found his bruised and broken body late in the afternoon, and the neighbor who came for Sam and his sister at the close of school gently told them the news.

Once more grief stalked through the Smith household; another of the boys had been taken by an inscrutable God, and it was following his new bereavement that Theophilus Smith's gray hair turned white, and the dark and brooding melancholy descended upon his wife which was never wholly to lift from her to the day of her death.

CHAPTER II

§ 1

In April, Mendon was heavy with the scent of spring. The twisted branches of the apple trees which had lifted their black nakedness against the gray skies of winter for five bleak, interminable months burst into a glory of pink and white loveliness. The cover crop of barley stood knee-deep, fresh, and luxuriantly green awaiting the plowshare to turn it back into the soil, fragrant now with heavy earthy smells and soggy with soft rains. A film of young grass shimmered along the surface of the cow-yard, buttercups and daisies lifted their bright faces above last year's stubble in the fields, trillium and arbutus edged the stone walls with faint touches of color, and new foliage on Bassett's Hill was splashed with glistening dogwood.

Sam felt like shouting as he stood in the wide doorway of the barn one early morning and looked out over the smiling world. The sun was coming up over the hills, shooting long shafts of light across the landscape. The boy had been up for nearly two hours already, stumbling out a little after five into cold night with stars shining serenely overhead, and only a pale luminousness in the east. His chores were finished, now,—the chickens fed, the wood brought in, the horses turned out, their stalls cleaned, the milking done. Two round tin buckets foaming to the top stood on the ground on either side of him. He had set them there a moment to look out over the valley tinted everywhere with shades of green and to inhale the lush odors of the early morning.

At fourteen, he did not grasp its full glory nor appreciate the loveliness of the prospect. It was always there each year as the seasons swung round the circle; spring followed winter, fall succeeded summer; spring was wet, summer hot, fall drear, winter cold. Spring was the time for the year's first plowing, it was the season of preparation, it meant

hard work,—long hours of it. But beauty pierced the casing of his young soul on this particular morning. Forever afterwards spring was to mean something more to him. There was no need of a teacher at his elbow as he stood in the barn doorway. Something stirred within him; the animal in his hard young make-up roused; the God in him answered; beauty illumined his soul; his heart swelled; a shout trembled in his throat. Great longings took possession of him; he wanted,—with all the yearning of which his mind and body were capable,—something, he did not know what. It seemed to him at the moment that he must rush down the hill with outstretched arms, giving vent to that repressed shout, clear the stone wall at the bottom with a bound, fling himself into the tall grass and the spring flowers beyond, roll in them, bite them, plunge on again, and leap naked and free into the clear glittering water of Miller Creek where the rocks had been piled to form a pool beneath the willows. For a moment he played with the idea. Why shouldn't he do this? Why shouldn't he do for once just what he wanted? What mattered it if he skipped his breakfast, took the day off, let his father manage the work by himself? To be free on such a morning, to do as he liked, to think of other things besides chores and grubbing in the earth, to satisfy this urge which now so completely possessed him. . . .

"Sam-mie!" It was his mother standing in the kitchen door, dish-rag in hand, a weary droop discernible in her thin shoulders. "Don't moon out there; it's late already and there're a lot of things I want you to do before you go to work."

"Yes, Ma, I'm coming." He picked up the handles of the milk pails, and holding them away from his body so as not to bump them with his knees, moved with steady steps toward the house.

Of course, it was not possible. They couldn't get along without him; they depended upon him, needed him,—needed him for the tasks his hands could do, for the errands his legs could run, for the work his brain and body could perform. There was always to-morrow to think of! The future! Provision for the future! He knew well the fight his parents were making to keep the roof over their heads, the little family together. He had been taken out of school two years before in order to help at home. Since David had gone, it was more than ever

a struggle, for hired men were hard to get and their wages still harder to pay. . . . No, there was nothing else for him; they couldn't spare him. There was work to be done,—lots of it,—and he must be busy from morning until night. That was it: work—work—work! He enjoyed it well enough; he had not a great deal at which to grumble; only there was always so much more work piling up.

§ 2

At the sink his father was washing in a tin basin his mother had filled from the kettle, and as Sam entered the kitchen, the old man squeezed his white beard with a large hand and the water ran from it in a trickle. He began to rub his face vigorously with a towel. Narcissa was slicing bread on the cheese chest, and Mrs. Smith frying corn-meal in a smoking pan on the stove. Cora, crippled with rheumatism, could no longer help. Her old joints had hardened into unbending rigidity and the mistress she had served so long and faithfully, with the aid of her daughter, now took care of her in turn. Mrs. Smith would not hear of her being taken to a hospital or an asylum. As long as the Smiths had a roof to shelter them, she declared Cora should share it. The old negress was a great burden, for she was utterly helpless and had to be washed, dressed, and tended like a baby. Theophilus Smith used to frown and shake his head. He hated to see his wife with this extra care upon her shoulders,—shoulders which carried far too great a load as it was. Sometimes he tried to think of her as the Mary Osgood of Charleston he had met thirty-six—thirty-seven years ago, graceful, dainty, and charming in her hoop-skirts, her dark shining hair in a waterfall at the back of her lovely white neck. That girl had died long ago. There was no semblance of her young beauty left in the lean figure with its thin shoulders and arms, in the wrinkled face, so hollow-eyed, so tired, so grief-stricken. Yet there remained the sweetness, gentleness, and kindness he had suspected were part of that Carolina girl's loveliness; she had only become more sweet, more gentle, more kind. She never found fault, never complained, never reproached him for the decline of their fortunes.

He drew up his chair now, and poured his china cup full to

the brim from the coffee-pot. . . . Well, better times were coming. He heard it on every side; the new trees would bear heavier and heavier each year; the price of hay was climbing. In particular, he had received word from Ezra the day before of a young fellow, good and reliable, who wanted to hire out for the summer, and he planned to drive to Framingham immediately breakfast was over in the hope of engaging him. This, unfortunately, would interfere with the day's work; he had meant to start plowing that morning. There was no help for it; this and other pressing matters would have to wait. The opportunity of obtaining a dependable hired man for the summer was too important to lose. He sighed nevertheless; the spring was upon them, the season much further along at this time of the year than he had anticipated. He wished Sam was a few years older. The boy, when he had more strength, was going to be an incalculable help. He glanced at him now, plunging his face and hands into the basin at the sink: a good boy and a steady one, he would have a fine body in a year or two. Already the chest and shoulders under the cotton shirt would make many a full-grown man envious. In a little while, Narcissa, too, would be more useful; she was seventeen, now, and did a great deal of the housework, but in a year or two, she ought to be able to take the management of everything, even the cooking, into her hands.

Sam joined his father at the table and began to eat hungrily; Narcissa presently sat down, and after a time, when the frying was finished, Mrs. Smith drew up her chair. They ate in silence, each busy with his or her own thoughts. A homely picture they made about the square table with its red-fringed cloth in the littered odorous kitchen, the morning sunshine slanting obliquely through the window, casting a bright parallelogram on the wall: a farmer, his wife, and their two children, partaking of the first meal of the day.

The man, white of head and beard, was still vigorous despite his sixty years. The hair was a trifle thin on top, but it curled abundantly about his ears and grew thickly upon his temples. His cheeks were leathery, the features heavy, the face deeply lined, but there was a leonine carriage to his head and a largeness and magnificence in his manner.

His wife, upon his left, looked frail; she was thin and angular; beneath her cotton gingham the two bones at the base of her neck made ugly lumps; her face was drawn and

her eyes sunk into deep pockets. But there was a touch of sweetness to her mouth,—folded in a little venerably at the corners, now,—that softened her expression and gave it a quality of benignity. When she smiled there came to her face a rare sweetness, as though a light illumined it. If there had ever been hardness or disdain there, it had long ago disappeared. The smile did not come often; generally a shadow of intimate sadness lay across her features.

Narcissa, opposite, abounded in health and high spirits. She was always merry, a laugh, sweet and joyous in quality, was ready at all times on her lips. She was stout of leg and arm, and her bosom was soft, rounded, and beautifully formed. She was not pretty, but she had a likable, attractive face, full of sparkle and vivacity; her eyes were always alight and her large mouth usually parted to show her big even white teeth. Her flesh had a healthy quality of firmness that made one want to take hold of her. She was a rare prize for some man, her father, watching her, used soberly to think; please God, he always added fervently with the thought, he would prove a good one and worthy of her!

Sam was like his sister in many ways and like his father in more. He had none of Narcissa's ebulliency or sunny radiance. His face was sober and dark; responsibility already had put its mark upon it. At this particular age, he was inclined to be gruff, almost surly in his manner. But like Narcissa, his flesh was hard and smooth, and he had the same wide mouth and big teeth. His black eyebrows were heavy and well-defined, and his dark eyes deep-set like his mother's. From his father he had derived his physique, his broad shoulders and chest, but he would never attain the other's height nor his large proportions. At fourteen, Sam was square and compact, and gave promise of great strength in years to come. Already a film of soft black down covered his cheeks and chin. Now, as he bent over his plate, devouring his food with a hasty spoon, his hair falling over his eyes and ears, he gave the impression of a young animal at its meat.

Toward the end of the meal his sister left the table and disappeared upstairs. She returned almost immediately and leaned over her father's shoulder, one arm about him, her cheek against his bearded face. In her hand she carried a bit of red dress material which she held before him.

"Pa," she said coaxingly, "when you're in Ezra's, see if he

has some ribbon to match this, won't you? Two inches wide. I only need a yard and a half."

Her father drew back, the better to see what she held, and cleared his throat with a doubtful sound. Narcissa kissed him and rubbed his cheek with hers.

"Now, Pa—listen," she said hastily. "It won't cost more than ten or fifteen cents . . ." She continued her entreaties, and presently Theophilus tucked the sample into his wallet with a sigh.

Sam glanced at his father's attire with interest; he had not noticed his town clothes before.

"You going to Framingham to-day, Pa?" he asked. "How about a hame for Dolly's harness?"

"And I'll need some rice, sugar, and a can of allspice, Thee," Mrs. Smith remarked with a little hesitancy. "We've run out of rice and the sugar's about all gone."

Theophilus Smith frowned, pursing his lips and bringing down his heavy white browns, but he made a note of these things without comment. He turned to his son.

"The Calvin boy,—that limb of Satan!—stopped here last night with a message from Ezra. He has a good man down there, he says, and I'm going in to have a talk with him. He promised to keep an eye out for one. . . . The orchard will have to wait, and as I'll have to take one of the horses, there's nothing to be done until I get back. You might start hoeing that truck garden, and, if this individual proves of any account, the tenant cottage will have to be cleaned——"

"The roof leaks like a sieve," Sam observed in his hoarse, half-man's voice.

"I am well aware of that, my son," said his father, knitting his brows. "Your statement adds nothing to my information. The roof must be made to serve. I'm not going to involve myself in this expense until I am thoroughly satisfied it is necessary."

There followed a general breaking up of the group. Narcissa busied herself with Cora's breakfast, and presently carried it in to the patient old cripple. The negress had been established in the dining-room of which the family in recent years had made no use. It had been impracticable to maintain her in the small, dark closet off the kitchen which formerly she had occupied. Narcissa jerked up the shade, pushed the window higher, and with cheerful gossip, sat down on the side

of the bed, and began to feed the invalid teaspoonful by teaspoonful. Mrs. Smith turned to the breakfast things and her dish-washing. Sam disappeared in the direction of the barn to harness the horse and drag the old surrey from the shed. Half-an-hour later, his father was jogging along the road toward Framingham.

The sun rose into a cloudless sky and flooded the farm and surrounding hills with gracious heat. The early morning mists vanished and things turned dry and grew warm to the touch. Bees hummed in the flowering laurel bushes and faint perfumes came and went illusively. From the kitchen rose the clatter of pans and the occasional clang of a stove-lid. Narcissa's happy voice, trilling an old song, floated through the open, upstairs windows from which the white curtains gently ballooned themselves now and then. Sam, bending to his hoeing, worked doggedly, his sleeves rolled up to the hard muscles of his arms, the sweat tickling his chest and wetting the inside band of his tattered straw hat.

At ten o'clock there was a creak of wheels in the road and the sound of a stopping vehicle. Narcissa glancing from a window, saw it was the postman and hurried out to the mail-box. There were two letters. One was from Boston, addressed to her mother in Julia's well-known hand, which would be full of welcome news about the absent daughter; the other was postmarked "New York," and Narcissa reading the printing in the upper left-hand corner, said aloud, with a kind of wonder in her voice: "Uncle Cyrus!"

§ 3

It was close to noon when Theophilus Smith turned the mare's head in at the picket gate, drove the surrey round to the rear of the house, and brought it to a standstill outside the kitchen door with a resounding "Whoa!" He always used his most stentorian voice to his animals. Sam, glancing up from the truck bed, saw he had brought the new hired man; a young fellow he looked,—younger than any they had ever had,—and as large as the boy's father. Sam dropped his hoe and ran to take charge of the horse. As he came up, his mother appeared at the kitchen door.

"Oh,—I'm glad you're back so early, Thee," she said. "I wasn't sure you'd be here in time for dinner."

Her husband wrapped the reins about the whip-socket and ponderously descended from the vehicle.

"This young man is Nick," he said. "I don't remember what your last name is, sir,—but I reckon that won't make much difference; you'll always be 'Nick' here. . . . He'll want something to eat, too, Mary."

"How do you do, Nick? I hope you're going to like it here. I have plenty of dinner. I'll get you a plate presently."

Sam always admired his mother's easy manner in speaking to servants or the hired man. He glanced curiously at the newcomer. He had a nice face, rather vacant, perhaps, and very red now with embarrassment. He was blond, had blue eyes, a bulky, awkward body, and big hands. Sam liked him; he hoped he would stay.

Narcissa came to the door, ran down the steps, threw her arms about her father's neck and kissed him vigorously.

"Did you get it, Pa?" she asked. "Could Ezra match it?"

Her father stared at his daughter puzzled, then scowled, pushed back his broad-brimmed hat, and tapped his forehead with a penitent finger.

"I declare, Narciss',—that ribbon went completely out of my mind! I'm sorry, my dear; I forgot all about it. I'll be going in again next week."

The girl's face clouded for the fraction of a second, but she hugged her father again, kissed him, and, assuring him that it didn't in the least matter, led him indoors.

Dinner of boiled beef and boiled potatoes was on the table, and the family already eating, when Sam joined them after showing Nick where to put the horse and surrey. As he washed up at the sink, he heard the letter being discussed which had arrived from Julia that morning.

A little less than a year before, the older daughter had secured a position in the public schools of Boston. Previously, for three years, she had taught in Milford, near Mendon. The principal of the Milford school, a young man, Karl Schlegel, it was suspected and feared by Julia's parents, had entertained a sentimental admiration for her. Mrs. Smith used to worry about it a great deal for Mr. Schlegel was already married, and not only had a wife but three small children. He used to take the long walk home up the hill with Julia after school hours, and Sam frequently saw them lingering at the gate. Whatever Karl's feelings may have been for his assistant, he

proved himself a good friend and an honorable one, for it was at his instigation that the girl applied for a teacher's position in the public schools of Boston and successfully met the requirements. She had gone off triumphantly in August to the big city and since then entertained her family with frequent letters. Narcissa envied her with all the passionate intensity of her strong young nature and was constantly talking of following her example; Theophilus Smith was proud of his daughter's achievement; his wife worried over the dangers and temptations of the city; Sam had no feeling about the matter one way or another. Julia was ten years older than he, and he had always been indifferent regarding her.

Her letter, to-day, contained the satisfactory news that she had at last been permanently assigned. All winter long, she had been acting as substitute, taking charge of classes in different parts of the city whenever a teacher fell ill or was forced to be absent. Now, she had been given a class of her own, a primary grade; the school was in one of the most congested districts and the crowding, she wrote, was terrible; each seat in her classroom had to accommodate two small scholars. She herself was very comfortably situated, sharing a room with one of the other teachers,—a Miss Crombe,—in a quiet, refined boarding-house in the neighborhood. She planned to come home in June as soon as the school term closed.

Narcissa rose abruptly in the midst of the talk, and brought her father the other envelope that had arrived that morning.

"Look, Pa," she said as she handed it to him, "it's from Uncle Cyrus." With her finger she indicated the printed name in the corner.

Her father took it from her, cleared his throat dryly, and with his bushy eyebrows fiercely knit, frowned at the address. Then he adjusted his nose-glasses carefully, pushed back his chair, and slit the envelope with a table knife. His family was aware of his feeling toward his brother, and no one spoke as he read deliberately.

When he had finished, he laid the letter on the table and poked it with the knife still in his hand.

"My brother Cyrus," he said with another dry cough, "has a habit of appealing to me when the force of circumstances makes it appear advisable."

"Why, what's the trouble with Cyrus?" Mrs. Smith asked as her husband returned to his dinner.

Theophilus pointed at the letter.

"I wish you'd read it, my dear," he replied, his beard moving rhythmically with his jaw. "I confess I don't understand my brother."

Mrs. Smith picked up the letter and in turn scanned its closely written pages.

"But why not, Thee?" she asked at length. "He offers to pay for the accommodation; he says much depends on the little girl getting into the country; we have a spare room and I think we'd enjoy having them."

"I do not propose, my dear, to be beholden to Cyrus."

"From his letter, I think, he would feel beholden to you," Mary Smith offered mildly.

"That may be, or may not. I desire to have no dealings with my brother."

"It might be of great assistance, the board he offers to pay is quite generous. I could take care of Sarah and the little girl for half as much,—and I think having them here would be real pleasant."

"Tell us about it, Ma," Narcissa begged.

It was explained that some four or five years previously, a niece of Sarah Smith's,—Cyrus's wife,—had come to make her home with her aunt in New York. Recently the little girl had been sick,—a serious case of blood poisoning, which had left her in a run-down condition. The doctor advised a change of air, the country if possible, and Cyrus Smith suggested that Ruth and his wife should come to Mendon, as soon as the weather grew warmer, and board with his brother's family for a few weeks or until the child's condition bettered.

"My circumstances have improved," he wrote; "I have done moderately well since I came here and I am in a position to offer what I hope you will consider ample compensation for the board of my wife and small niece. I can afford thirty dollars a month and before seeking suitable surroundings elsewhere, it occurred to me that you and Mary might care to take in the two. I am familiar with the healthful conditions around Mendon and satisfied they would be ideally suited to Ruth. Besides this, I have thought a companionship between her and your daughters might prove mutually agreeable. Julia is perhaps too old for our little girl, but your younger daughter, I fancy, is about the same age . . ."

Narcissa exploded.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "how old *is* the child?" She calculated quickly. "Why, she isn't more than ten!"

"People forget how children grow up," her mother reminded her. "Your Uncle Cyrus hasn't seen you since you were a very little girl, remember."

"Oh, I think it would be fun to have them," Narcissa went on, enthusiastically. "It would be company all summer, and goodness knows, it's dead enough round here! . . . What kind of a woman is Aunt Sarah?"

"Not much like your mother," her father informed her. "As I remember her she was a sour, religious fanatic——"

"Fie, Thee," his wife interrupted. "Sarah Smith's a good God-fearing woman."

"Good and God-fearing though she be, she'll not spend the summer under my roof."

"But, Thee, consider a moment, my dear. We have the spare room upstairs, and the money's really a consideration. We could practically pay half the new hired man's wages with what I'd be able to save."

"I don't propose to be under obligations to my brother."

"But somebody will be only too anxious to be what you call 'under obligations' to him," Narcissa put in.

Her father eyed her with severity.

"I am the best judge of my own actions," he said. "I want no kith or kin of your uncle's in my house. I should decline to offer them an asylum for ten times the sum he offers. . . . We'll hear no more of it."

He rose impressively and addressed his wife.

"You have a young man out there to feed. I have great hopes of this young fellow. He seems strong and willing and appears to be a cut above the riff-raff that usually come our way. I shall be glad to have you all do what you can to make his first impressions here pleasant." He turned to his son.

"Did you clean out the tenant house?"

Sam hastened to explain he had intended to get at it the first thing after dinner, having no idea that his father would return from Framingham so early. Theophilus cut him short.

"It's just as well. You needn't bother about it. We'll house him temporarily in Cora's old room. . . . —You may have to manage his meals for him, my dear," he said to his wife; "he tells me he knows nothing of cooking."

"Oh, that will be no trouble," Mrs. Smith said cheerfully. "I shan't mind it in the least. Where does he come from?"

§ 4

No one ever learned where Nick came from. Ezra Hornpipe, himself, did not know. The young man had drifted into the General Store one day and asked for work; Ezra, knowing of Smith's desperate straits, had kept him for the night and sent word to Mendon.

Nick was a mystery. Frankly a country yokel in speech, in manner and appearance, there was something about him that set him above his type. A blond giant of exceptional strength, simple and unassuming, he had the willing disposition of a docile truck horse; he had no bad habits, neither smoked nor drank. It was difficult to rouse him in the mornings and Mrs. Smith was obliged often to call him two or three times. But except for this desire to lie abed, small fault could be found with him. He had a smooth face, almost pink skin, and although he was somewhere near twenty-six, practically no hair upon lips or chin. There was a marked quality of sweetness about Nick; he was both amiable and obliging. He did whatever he was told to do with ready cheerfulness. Not so much could be said for his mentality; he was just a good-natured, clumsy animal. Gratitude for any kindness shown him was expressed in the dumb thankfulness of eloquent eyes. His speech, when he found his tongue, was hoarse and halting. More like an overgrown boy than a man, the Smiths treated him with familiarity. Circumstances threw him intimately among them. He lived in the same house with them, occupying Cora's former dark closet off the kitchen, and Mrs. Smith gave him his meals after the others.

Nick with his enormous ungainly strength proved an indefatigable worker; once a task was given him, he kept doggedly at it until it was completed or until his energies were directed into another channel. Often he had to be called to his meals. If he had any amusements of his own, he was never detected in their enjoyment. He read little, although he could decipher words and write them in a crude, illiterate way. He rarely if ever left the farm, and when he did, it was on some

errand of his employer's, or to do some hauling with the team in or out of Framingham. Sunday mornings he lay in bed until noon, and spent the afternoons washing his clothes. His wages were kept secreted in some hidden box or hole of his own; he was never known to spend a penny of them. On the day of his coming, he had had with him a bulky bundle tied up in oilcloth, corded with rope, and a bulging portmanteau. In these was all the clothing he was ever seen to wear; as far as known, he never purchased a single additional garment. An outstanding characteristic of the man was his cleanliness. He used to carry several buckets of water out to the barn after his supper, and Sam, prowling in the neighborhood, would frequently hear him splashing about in the dark, grunting at his ablutions like an animal. In the mornings he generally appeared in a fresh shirt, crumpled round the collar but clean, and there was never noticeable about him an aroma either of the stable or the fields.

In a few weeks, Nick became as much a part of the family as David had been, years before. He came and went, did his work, followed without question or hesitation his employer's bidding, appeared hulking and embarrassed in the kitchen, sat hunched and elephantine at the table, ate hugely and grossly the food that was set before him. Sam would sometimes observe his blue eyes on such occasions, watching his mother, his sister, and father, following their varied movements with the stolid, unimaginative gaze of a dog,—his head turning with his look. They came to ignore him in their midst, much as a very aged person or a deaf one in a family circle is often ignored. It was just old Nick sitting there,—good old obliging Nick.

The summer came blazing hot and sweet with smells of warm earth, new grass, leaves, and slowly ripening things. Julia returned from Boston, and studied Pedagogy and the "Art of Training the Young Mind" in the shade of the scraggly sycamore that roughed its branches against the shingles on the farmhouse roof all summer and accounted for several leaks in winter. Narcissa talked of applying for a teacher's position in the Mendon school, of visiting Julia in Boston during her Christmas vacation, of taking up dressmaking, of doing anything and everything which would open up life for her. Theophilus Smith worried about the squirrels that were continually eating the tender new leaves of his young apple trees

and stalked the hills, shotgun beneath his arm. Mrs. Smith pottered in the kitchen, cooked, washed, sewed, tried to prevent her daughters helping her, and regularly on Sunday afternoons, laden with flowers which she let no one pick but herself, made a pilgrimage to Jonathan's grave in the village churchyard where, when she was alone, she quavered out the verses of "Beautiful Zion" while the tears fell down her withered cheeks unchecked. Sam grubbed at his work, doing the morning chores, driving the team, wondering about little, desiring less, growing brown and hard, each day gaining in strength and weight. Nick moved quietly, awkwardly among them, amiable, hard-working, inexacting, docile,—a peasant with willing hands and a dull, unimaginative mind.

In September, Julia re-packed her trunk, dutifully kissed her father, mother, brother, and sister, and with a self-sufficient air took herself back to Boston. The apples came in extra heavy, promising a banner harvesting; the hay was cut and stored in clear weather, the barley ran forty bushels to the acre. Theophilus Smith grew expansive and declamatory; he prophesied that two more such years would put him in a position to take up the mortgage Ezra held, and that if they continued, he intended to have help in the kitchen, to give Narcissa a winter in Boston with her sister and see that Sam fitted himself for college. October came in with an early frost turning the trees over the countryside into red and golden pillars of glory, while Thanksgiving brought snow, a great smothering blanket of it that lay four feet deep in the drifts and buried the whole world in a dazzling cover of white.

That winter the snow was constantly with them, one fall following hard upon another. Twice the Smiths were completely snowed in, the softly dropping flakes filtering down unceasingly, building great mounds that reached almost to the sills of the upstairs windows. Sam and Nick burrowed a way out again and again; the water in the well had a coating of ice on it each morning several inches thick. Imprisoned in their farmhouse, existence for the little family became something of a problem. For weeks at a time the road to Framingham was impassable, and floundering expeditions had to be made to Milford for slim baskets of provisions. Even the one available store ran short of supplies, and the food Mrs. Smith was able to furnish her household, while never scant, was of the simplest variety.

On the coldest night of the winter, old Cora died. They found her in the morning seemingly still asleep, but when Narcissa tried to rouse her, there was no response. Keeping warm during the nights was a difficult matter for one and all. Every available bit of covering was in use and Cora had had more than her share. On the night preceding her death, the fires in both stoves had been built high, and Narcissa, before retiring, had put a hot brick in the cripple's bed. But the piercing cold was not to be withstood, the old woman's body had little natural warmth in it, and some time during the bitterest hours, the thin blood within her veins had yielded to the penetrating chill and ceased to flow.

Cora's burial made a deep impression upon Sam. It was out of the question to think of getting the corpse to the undertaker's in Framingham. Mary Smith with her own hands washed the old shriveled body and dressed it in the best garment she possessed; Nick tore down some boarding back of the barn and constructed a rough coffin; he and Sam dug deep into the snow-drifts among the trees close by, and with pick and axe attacked the frozen ground until a shallow grave was scooped out of the earth. The boy never forgot the sad and awesome funeral: Nick and his father struggling with the heavy box through the snow, his mother following, wiping her wet eyes; Narcissa with bowed head and clasped hands; and presently his father standing beside the open grave, his white hair and beard flowing in the chill winter wind like some tribal patriarch, prayer-book in hand, reading eloquently, solemnly:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

CHAPTER III

§ 1

It was during one of the times when a blizzard was raging and the Smiths were held captive for several days within the house, that the first suspicion came to Sam of a matter which later was to cause him much distress. He was sitting on the cheese chest in the kitchen trying to mend a broken lock, his mother was poking wood into the stove, by the light of the snow-incrusted window his father was attempting to read Pope's "Essay on Man," while Narcissa came and went about the room, busy with preparations for supper. Sam, vexed by defeat in his effort, dropped the small mechanism beside him, and sank back against the wall with an annoyed frown. As he did so, his gaze happened to fall upon Nick sitting stolidly, inertly at the table, hunched in his seat, his great hands lying in front him, palms up. One glimpse of the man's blue, doglike eyes fixed upon his sister as she moved back and forth, told its tale. As Sam watched, the girl came to the table and began to remove the few objects upon it, making ready to set it for the meal. Nick's eyes never left her face. He moved his hands so that she might brush the table and spread the red fringed cloth; she paid no more attention to him as she proceeded with her work than if he had been something inanimate. The cutlery was brought and arranged, the napkins, cups. Presently she carried the warmed plates and set them at her father's place,—and it was then, as she paused a moment adjusting the pile, that she met Nick's steady gaze with her own. It was only the briefest of glances, followed by a slight reddening of her face, but her brother knew, in that instant, something was between them.

His first sensation was one of shock and hurt. At once he considered Nick from a new angle, resentment struggling up instinctively. He had much of his father's pride, and it was roused immediately by the thought that Nick,—common, igno-

rant, illiterate Nick, a farm-hand and day-laborer,—should dare to admire his sister. Yet as he studied Nick's simple face with its mild blue eyes, its gentle, cow-like expression, it was impossible even for the boy to believe the man meant anything harmful. Shame for Narcissa followed quickly; it sickened him to think she could tolerate for a moment such admiration. Then, swiftly came the thought of his father. God,—the old man would kill Nick in a jiffy if he knew!

It never occurred to Sam to tell either of his parents what he suspected. He felt his knowledge must be kept from them at any cost. From that hour he became a stealthy, incessant watcher, hoarding his secret, forever seeking fresh confirmation. If there was any, it was hard to be certain of it. He fancied Nick hung about his sister's neighborhood, and that the girl often lingered in the kitchen if the man was there. Sometimes he caught a furious blush upon Nick's face, and saw the big fellow sink his head between his great shoulders in a clumsy effort to hide it. If his glances met Narcissa's Sam never had the positive assurance it was intentional. Despite the missing evidence, his suspicions grew.

It was not until the snow began to melt and spring again was in the air, that the last vestige of doubt was dispelled. When the work in the fields recommenced, Narcissa suddenly took to walking over the farm; sometimes it was to gather wild flowers, sometimes to visit the Widow Cook-Taft whose cottage was half-a-mile down the road, sometimes to explore the willows along Miller Creek. Invariably her course led her, Sam observed, past where Nick was working. The boy spying from some hidden vantage point, witnessed many of these meetings. There was nothing he could find to criticize in their behavior. Narcissa would linger a moment, flowers or book in hand, to lean across the low stone wall that separated road from field; Nick would stop the team and let the horses breathe a moment or rest upon his scythe for the brief interval. They talked a little,—a few exchanges; then Narcissa would continue on her way, and Nick, without a following glance, would return to his work. Yet something was brewing of which the boy was definitely conscious; the whole farm seemed alive to it; the very air, growing daily warmer and more beguiling, felt charged with it. Sam brooded, glowered and held his tongue. Hating the manner in which his sister was conducting herself, he yet saw no way of stop-

ping her. She was dearer to him than either his father or mother; he was ready to fight for her with every ounce of strength and every drop of blood before harm should come to her, and he knew enough of life to realize that harm must inevitably come to her and to them all if she persisted in her fancy for this farm-hand.

An early thunder-storm deluged the farm unexpectedly one hot May afternoon. Sam's mother called him from his work; Narcissa had gone for a walk clad in a light summer dress; she sent him with his father's rubber coat to rescue her from the downpour. Nick was clearing brush at the lower end of the stony pasture; Sam could guess in what direction his sister had gone. Miller Cree meandered through the willows just beyond the stony pasture. He came upon them among the trees where they had taken shelter. Nick had his sister in his arms, her figure was almost lost in his enveloping embrace, her face was lifted to his and he was kissing her.

Nausea swept over the boy, an ache twisted his loins, sick tremors shot through his body. He buried his face in his hands, wanting to cry, and sank down out of sight in the wet grass. Presently he could distinguish voices and the sound of Narcissa's steps close at hand.

"I must go," she said. He could hear her panting a little. "Ma will be wondering what's happened to me."

"It's stopped," came Nick's hoarse enunciation. "You won't get wet."

"Good-bye."

There was no answer from the man. A pause followed, then the girl hurried away and after another interval there sounded the rhythmical chop of Nick's brush hook.

Buried deep in the grass, the boy groaned in utter wretchedness through clenched teeth.

§ 2

An agony of emotion ensued. Conscious of sex himself for only a short time, it was now thrust upon him overwhelmingly. The attachment between Narcissa and Nick meant only one thing to him,—animal desire. That their feelings toward one another might be dignified by the word "love," that they were only two young creatures into whose hearts Nature had poured her magic potion, that they were drawn together by a mutual

attraction in which passion had no conscious part, never entered his mind. In letting Nick kiss her, his sister had demeaned and cheapened herself, and he was torn between a desire to upbraid her, and a wish to be revenged upon her defiler. Her pretty blushes, the new bloom in her cheeks, her fresh laughter, and gay spirits signified to her brother nothing but what was evil in her. He knew she was thinking of Nick and believed her guilty of wicked thoughts in connection with her lover. Continually he speculated on their meetings, wondering how Narcissa surrendered herself to the coarse and clumsy yokel's embrace, how Nick managed to take her in his arms and fondle her. He was haunted by fancies, visions, and foul imaginings. He rolled about in his bed at night and fought his thoughts.

During the immediate weeks that succeeded, he set himself to do what he could to keep the lovers apart. In his truculent way, he found courage to ask his mother why she allowed Narcissa to wander alone along the roads and fields; he predicted she would meet a tramp and would have a terrible fright; there were a lot of tramps in the farm's vicinity of late, he told her. But his mother only smiled at him, kissed him and called him "a good little brother." He kept as close an eye upon the house as possible, and when he saw his sister leave it, followed her stealthily. If he came upon her in Nick's vicinity he hung about until she turned away, and sometimes he invented excuses for taking Nick to some other part of the farm. But with all his vigilance he knew they eluded him.

One day he found himself alone with Narcissa under the apple trees. Suddenly he turned upon her and quite unexpectedly to himself, blurted out:

"What do you want to let Nick kiss you for?"

The effect of his question was electrical. The girl's hands flew to her throat, her frightened eyes fastened themselves upon his, she went white, then red, and her breath left her.

"What—do you mean?" She struggled to give the words an ordinary inflection; her effort was pitiful.

Sam glowered and kicked a clod of dirt with his shoe, making no attempt to explain. Narcissa pretended indignation; she took an affronted tone with him. He stopped her with a growl.

"Aw—quit it," he said gruffly. "I'll tell Pa if you don't."

At once she capitulated,—capitulated completely, crumpled,

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whimpering, against the tree-trunk beside them, and in a moment tears came in a rush.

Sympathy rose instantly in him.

"Don't, Narciss'—don't do that!" he said, putting his hand upon her arm. "I won't tell Pa,—honest I won't. I know all about you and Nick ever since last winter. I've seen you and him down under the willows and I haven't told a soul."

"Oh, Sam—Sam," his sister sobbed; "you don't know,—you can't understand! I love him so, Sammy,—I love him so."

Her brother scowled and fisted his hands. He had not expected this. Censure had been in his heart and suddenly pity stood in its place. He began to grope for a way to console her. He reached for her hand and she clung to it tightly, pressing the other against her eyes and trying to choke back her sobs.

A long talk followed. With no further hesitation Narcissa confessed her infatuation, and told of Nick's equally ardent attachment. They loved each other truly, with all the strength of their hearts; she wanted him and he her. Both realized how dark the future was.

"He really loves me, Sam," Narcissa said, the tears pouring down her face. "He asks only to be near me. He's the kindest, gentlest human being in the world; he's like a faithful dog. I wouldn't hurt him if I could, and God knows I don't want to!" Sobs caught and choked her. The boy felt his own eyes smart and shut his teeth. After a little, he said:

"You know, Narciss'—going 'round with him is no good. You know he might get you into trouble, and if he did, Pa'd turn you out of doors and kill him sure as a wink."

She shook the tears from her eyes.

"No—no, Sammy; there isn't any danger of that. Nick's good, and if he wasn't, I am."

So simply said, so unaffectedly and honestly, it was convincing. A weight rose from his heart.

"You wouldn't, would you?" he persisted.

"Of course I wouldn't."

They discussed Nick's prospects,—a few hundred dollars saved up,—nothing more. He could always get a job working in the fields, but he could not depend on that in wintertime. It was far from enough to keep a wife. There was no use appealing to the girl's parents. Pa would be furious, of

course, and Ma would be equally disapproving; it was the fate of fates she had always feared most for her daughters: a farmer's wife, and poor Nick was only a farm-hand.

§ 3

After this a change came over Sam's spirit. From being ashamed of his sister, darkly suspicious of Nick, and an enemy of both, he turned ally and friend. No longer did he spy on them or attempt to interfere with their meetings. Often he helped make these possible, engineering his father and mother out of the way, so that the two might be alone. Ready to do anything and everything for his sister's happiness, his heart was now filled with a tremendous pity for her. He began to consider what would happen if she and Nick ran away together and were married. Nick, after all, was a nice fellow, his parents liked him, his mother was even fond of him and said so; already he was almost like a member of the family. Sam thought of running away, too, and helping them earn a living.

The situation was unchanged when, late in June, Julia came back from Boston. She had been at home hardly more than a week before she was in full possession of Narcissa's secret, and without a moment's hesitation carried her knowledge straight to her father.

The storm broke with even greater violence than Sam had feared. His mother wept and wailed; his father thundered and inveighed. Poor, clumsy, vacant-eyed, simple Nick was told to pack; Narcissa was crushed under a torrent of reproaches, censure, and rebuke. She was driven to her room and ordered not to leave the house under any pretext.

Shaking his thick finger at her prostrate figure, convulsed with weeping, her father in awful solemnity warned her:

"You quit your home to keep any rendezvous with this bumpkin, and you quit it forever!"

Pacing the kitchen with angry strides, he declared his intention of shooting Nick on sight if he found him loitering about the place, and he directed Sam to report the first glimpse of him.

But when the opportunity presented itself for this threat to be carried out, the irate father substituted a rain of abuse and admonition for his shotgun.

A few mornings after his dismissal, they found Nick sitting at the roadside, a quarter of a mile away, gazing stupidly before him, his great hands hanging listlessly between his knees. Theophilus Smith drew up his horse, and ordered him to be off, repeating his determination to shoot him if he caught him hanging round the farm. Nick, without protest and without reply, rose and obediently sauntered away, but the next day, Sam discovered him again, this time some distance from the farm in the opposite direction. The boy warned him of his father's anger, but Nick only smiled and amiably nodded his head. Sam left him sitting idly as he had found him, his hands dangling between his knees, his blue eyes fixed vacantly in front of him; and at home, he said nothing of the encounter.

Narcissa never knew her lover waited. They convinced her that any consideration of him was utterly out of the question; mother, father, sister showed her conclusively he was a churl, a cow-herd, a lout; they wrung from her a sobbing admission it was so, and extorted from her a promise neither to see nor attempt to communicate with him again. Crying for long hours in her room, mourning through the days and nights the man she loved, and who had been driven out of her life, she kept her word. But all summer long Nick lingered in the vicinity. He made no more definite effort to see Narcissa; he never set foot upon the Smith property; no one ever discovered where he had moved his things or how he lived. Once or twice a week, Sam or his father would see him sitting in the hot sun beside the dusty road, his great hands dangling, his eyes staring before him, waiting, waiting, waiting.

The first frosts had come and there was a sharp nip in the air when they came upon him for the last time. After that he disappeared and no one ever heard of him or saw him again.

CHAPTER IV

§ 1

With the passing of Nick, misfortune seemed once more to return to the pursuit of the Smith family. No satisfactory help could be secured. The next hired men proved a lazy, inferior, nefarious lot who stayed a few weeks or days, drew their wages, and departed, or else mysteriously vanished with things not their own. A serious fire occurred in the barn and the last year's yield of hay which was packed in the loft was badly damaged and became a total loss. Ezra Hornpipe, who had stood the Smiths' staunch friend and generous helper for so many years, died and his affairs passed into the hands of his young brother-in-law, Phineas Holliday, of whom Theophilus Smith had a contemptuous opinion,—a "whipper-snapper" he described him. Lastly, Sam's mother, carrying into the kitchen an armful of wood, missed the top tread of the few steps that led out into the yard, fell and fractured her elbow. Old Adam Howe, the doctor who had officiated at Sam's birth, was dead long ago, and a newcomer, a practitioner of Milford, mended the break, but when the splints and bandages were removed a few weeks later, the elbow refused to flex and Mrs. Smith carried a stiff right arm to the day of her death.

Narcissa continued to grieve for her clumsy, blond giant. A marked change came over the girl; the ebulliency, the impulsive eagerness, the wild spirits that had always characterized her gave place to a gentle gravity. She voiced no regret, her tears dried, she appeared reconciled, but the wound was deeper than any of them had suspected, and it left an ugly scar. She began seriously to apply herself to a course of study which would qualify her as a teacher.

Sam grew steadily larger and stronger; his muscles not only hardened, but his face and nature as well. The bulk of the farm work descended upon his shoulders; the help was intermittent, ineffectual, and Theophilus Smith was getting old.

During the winter that followed, he aged rapidly; his broad back grew more and more stooped, his big hands with their thick strong fingers became perceptibly more veined and tremulous; there appeared a watery uncertainty in his eye, his resonant voice was less vigorous.

The work piled up on Sam; there was no choice for him but to accept it and do his best to carry the load. There began for him the years in which the days held small respite from hard, sweating toil. Summer and winter he was up at five in the mornings, disposing of the chores before breakfast, and shortly after seven in the fields, plowing, harrowing, weeding, pruning, digging. He never caught up with all there was to do; fresh and unexpected exigencies were forever presenting themselves. All day long in the broiling sun, in the sopping rain, or in driving sleet and snow, he plugged doggedly on, struggling with tasks all too heavy for one pair of young shoulders no matter how willing or strong.

The boy had no pity for himself; that his lot was a hard one never occurred to him. The work had to be done and there was no one else to do it. A certain grimness came upon him at times when he thought of the future, and the gloom settled into his heart, into the very marrow of his bones like a corroding sediment. He saw no better times ahead, no prospect of brighter days. He and his father, mother, sister were caught in a trap; they were butting their heads against a stone wall; they were hemmed in, harnessed, condemned. Youth with its cheery optimism, its ready faith, its bubbling hope was never his to enjoy. He brooded, when he thought at all, over the desolation of the years to come. He had small time to think, being usually too tired to do anything but eat and sleep. Life meant to him only work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work. He never knew what it was to have a night off, he never experienced a day of fun or relaxation with boys of his own age, he had no time to sample vices, to know drink or women, or even to smoke; except for his sister, he was ignorant of girls, he had hardly ever spoken to one in his life.

In spite of his efforts, matters slowly slipped from bad to worse. At the end of another year, a teacher's position fell vacant in the little Hopedale school which all the younger Smith children had attended in years gone by, and the place was offered to Narcissa. She was obliged to decline it. There was no one free to drive her to the schoolhouse and back, and

more than this, she could not be spared from home; her mother with her stiff arm no longer could manage the cooking and housework alone. Theophilus Smith quarreled with Phineas Holliday who promptly called the mortgage which had endured so many years, and it was with difficulty that a neighbor was found to assume it. New trading relations had to be established, and the only other store in Framingham that did a general business with the farmers was operated by a Jew who was disposed to be none too friendly. Sam feared it was but a question of time before his father would have a falling out with Zeb Harris, turn on him, and give him the full benefit of his fine invective. When this occurred, the boy felt that the Merciful Providence in which his parents professed an unfaltering faith, alone would know what would become of them.

In all the years of struggle and hardship, actual want had never touched the Smith household, but poverty, gaunt, grim and ugly, eventually stood at their door. Zeb Harris allowed just so much merchandise and provender to be drawn on credit, and when once this was reached, there was an end. When more grain, more apples, more eggs and butter or vegetables were brought in, he was ready to resume business, but until these appeared, he allowed nothing to leave his store. Sam's heart often ached for his proud, dignified old father who was forced to temporize with this uncivil Jew whom he despised. He saw the white head grow increasingly bowed, the fingers tremble uncertainly against the flowing majestic beard, and he knew that his father was exercising more self-control than he had ever done in his life.

A time came, when Sam had just turned his nineteenth birthday, that at last there was undisguised hunger in the home. Weeks went by when no meat appeared upon the table except the occasional fowl which it was felt might be spared from the flock. The truck garden was barren, for it was a late spring; the trees were only just coming into blossom. Though a fair crop was indicated, there was no way upon which it might be realized. Credit at Zeb Harris's had ceased. They were too much in debt already to borrow in advance on the promise of the trees. Supplies ran lower and lower and then ran out; staple articles like sugar and flour, starch and salt, no matter how carefully husbanded, grew steadily less and less. A day arrived when there was no more coffee left

and not a drop of kerosene for the lamps. Sam, opening abruptly the kitchen door, found his mother, with her head on the kitchen table, crying, her crooked arm sticking up awkwardly before her. That afternoon without a word to his father, he drove into Framington, saw Zeb, then Phineas, and returned with both the coal-oil and coffee, and a ten-pound sack of flour.

A little later, Mrs. Smith wrote to Julia, telling of their urgent need, and Julia promptly replied with a five-dollar bill. This, too, was kept secret from the old man. Early summer found them all at the lowest ebb. Sam sold whatever there was of value about the place. He got rid of a useless hayrick, and a rusty hand pump that had survived from David's day; he sold discarded farm implements, ancient harness covered with cobwebs and hay-dust that had hung for years on the rafters in the barn, the broken furniture and empty picture frames in the attic, old iron and some disintegrating leather-bound law books he discovered in a trunk. His mother and sister abetted him in these proceedings, and all were careful that Theophilus should know nothing about them. The only laughter in the house that Sam remembered during these hard and bitter days occurred over some of the unsuccessful attempts they made to get the old man out of the way when the junk that was to be sold had to be loaded into the back of the surrey.

When Julia came home in June, it was hoped by all that she would see for herself the gravity of the position and in some way help out with the difficulties. She was indeed shocked to learn of the makeshifts to which the family had been obliged to have recourse, and insisted at once on paying something each week for her board and room, but she surprised and stunned them by announcing shortly after the middle of July that she was going to Canada for the rest of her vacation to visit Elsie Crombe, the teacher with whom she shared a room in Boston.

§ 2

It was at this low point in their affairs, that Narcissa and her mother, experimenting with ways and means by which money might be raised, hit upon the idea that saved them from ruin. This was the invention of a kind of confec-

tion. Theophilus had several demijohns of old cider stored in the cellar. Some of these had turned to vinegar and contained a high percentage of alcohol. The liquid, while retaining its strong flavor of apples, was unpalatable on account of the acid formed in the over-fermentation. Fruit rinds, particularly orange peel, soaked in this for several days and then heavily coated with sugar, made a delicious sweetmeat. A combination of fortunate circumstances came to the Smiths' assistance. The mother sent a small box of the sliced orange peel,—it was cut into thin slivers which after steeping in the cider curled into neat spirals,—to Julia in Ontario; Elsie Crombe's uncle, a large retailer of candy in Boston, happened to be visiting his niece at the time; he saw something at once in the new sweet which might take the public's fancy, and he told Julia that if her mother and sister would agree to furnish him with a steady supply, he would put the confection out in attractive boxes and see what could be done with it.

Hope and energy filled the hearts in the Mendon farmhouse once more. Sam's mother shook off the depression that had hung about her for so many years and seemed suddenly to grow young again; something of Narcissa's old ebulliency returned. There was new life and new enthusiasm once more in the Smith kitchen. When the fruit came in, crates of oranges and sacks of sugar were exchanged for some of the apples. Peeling and slicing began in earnest, every available pot and pan in the house was filled with cider and the rinds set to soaking. The departure of the first shipment,—a large packing-case lined with several layers of white shelf-paper, and filled to the brim,—was a great occasion for them all. Mrs. Smith frankly wept with emotion, Narcissa put her arms about her mother and held her close, tears in her own eyes, Theophilus invoked the blessing of God on the enterprise.

But although the candy was an unqualified success and although Mr. Crombe wrote immediately urging them to send him all they could, the returns were pitifully small. After the oranges and sugar and the expressage were paid for, a handful of dollars represented the profits. Sam saw at once that if any considerable money was to be made, the industry would have to be carried on in a much more extensive scale, the oranges and sugar bought wholesale, the cider fermented in vats, and the candy shipped in large lots. There was only one person among his acquaintances who might be interested in

the undertaking, and be persuaded to come in with them on some kind of a share-and-share basis, and this was Phineas Holliday. He had what little money was needed to make a start, and was in a position to buy the oranges and sugar at advantageous prices. Phineas was shrewd, and Sam had a high opinion of his business ability. He was a young man, not more than twenty-seven or -eight, and the quarrel between him and Sam's father had been due entirely,—his son had always believed,—to the old man's quick and unreasonable temper. Phineas had shown more than once a willingness to be friendly. When Sam had appealed to him during the previous hard spring and had explained to him his family's need and Zeb Harris's refusal to accommodate them, Phineas had let him have the coffee and kerosene, and had added the ten-pound sack of flour. There remained only the proud irascible old nature to be won over, but Theophilus Smith had grown more temperate, less cantankerous with increasing adversity and advancing age. If Phineas could be interested in the new scheme and then could be persuaded to see his father and make the first overtures toward reconciliation, Sam had hopes all would be well.

§ 3

On the very evening of the day this plan was formulated in his mind, he harnessed the team to the sleigh and drove over to Framingham, taking Narcissa with him, for it was a starry winter night and the road had packed hard under a heavy mantle of snow that had fallen a few days before. They found Phineas at his mother's house where he lived with his sister, Mrs. Ezra Hornpipe.

From the outset, the project appealed to the enterprising young merchant. After some figuring in which the cost of the raw materials in bulk was supplied, both Phineas and Sam were impressed with the results, representing profits that might be made if the undertaking was conducted on the large scale proposed. A share-and-share-alike division proved mutually satisfactory, and Phineas proposed to go to Boston and draw up a definite agreement with Crombe. Sam explained they could do nothing until his father's approval of the arrangement between them was secured. He begged Phineas to visit the old man and patch up the difference. But

here his prospective partner balked. He wasn't the kind to bear resentment, he said, but Sam's father had used some pretty strong language to him in his store, right before a lot of his friends, and Phineas didn't think it was deserved after all the years in which Ezra had stood his friend.

Argument brought no conclusion. Phineas had a stiff-necked New England inflexibility difficult to bend. Sam was beginning to fear that the project he had at heart and which he felt sure was going to mean so much to them all, was about to be killed in the egg, when Narcissa knocked at the door in which the business conference was taking place. It was midnight, she told the two men, the drive home was long, and much as she hated to interrupt them, she felt that she and Sam ought to be getting started. Her brother in despair explained to her what was the stumbling block between Phineas and himself, and it was then that Narcissa with a troubled frown and concern in her face, said:

"Oh, but, Mr. Holliday, you couldn't find it in your heart not to be generous to an old man like my father!"

Whether it was her look or her words or the appeal in her voice, the day was won. Phineas agreed to drive over in the morning and make the peace.

"I don't want you to think," he said as he helped tuck the heavy sleigh robe about their feet, "that I'm coming over just because this scheme of yours looks good; I'm doing it because—" he glanced at Sam, "—your sister asks me to."

§ 4

There was a fine snow falling the next day and the sky was gray-black and all the world hushed and very still. Another heavy storm was in the air. It was bitterly cold. Phineas when he arrived was chilled to the marrow, and Sam, to warm him, took him into the kitchen where his mother was busy at the stove. Mrs. Smith had the coffee-pot still hot, and she insisted upon pouring Phineas a cup and making him sit down at the table to drink it.

The whole family had been keenly alive to the father's mood all morning. He had come downstairs later than usual and had complained of feeling heavy and dull. Conscious of the impending interview on the amicable outcome of which

so much depended, his wife and children in turn had tried to humor and cheer him. Narcissa had been especially affectionate, Mrs. Smith had urged upon him a hearty breakfast, Sam had built a good fire in the air-tight stove in the parlor and had left in there the *Christian Union*, his favorite paper, which had arrived in the mail that morning, as a bait to lure him to the warm room after his meal, and thus have him out of the way when Phineas arrived. The ruse had proved successful and Narcissa had reported a few minutes before that he had put on his glasses and was comfortably established in a rocker by the stove.

Sam led Phineas to the door and opened it.

"Pa," he said, "here's an old friend of ours who's called especially to see you."

Theophilus made no sign. He sat in the rocker bending a little forward, the paper in his hand, and when Sam repeated his words and looked closer, he saw that his father was dead. As he touched his shoulder, the head rolled to one side, and the glasses fell from his nose and dropped with a clatter to the floor.

§ 5

Sam's uncle, Cyrus Smith, came up from New York for the funeral. He was a thin man with sparse hair and a gaunt face, rather acid of countenance, devout in manner. He appeared deeply affected by the death of his brother. Sam, inheriting some of his father's feeling toward him, was inclined to look coldly upon his uncle, but the honesty of his grief made an impression. More than once he heard his father's brother reproach himself in bitter terms for the estrangement that had come to exist between Theophilus and himself.

Julia arrived from Boston the day after the news reached her, and she and Cyrus assumed charge of affairs. Phineas Holliday, who felt himself involved in the family's loss on account of having been Sam's companion at the moment the old man's death had been discovered, proved himself a good friend at this time, attending to an infinite number of details in a very kind and efficient way. Neighbors and acquaintances from all over the surrounding country drove in to express their sympathy, pay their respects, and to offer assistance.

The funeral, for Sam, was a harrowing experience. His mother, trembling the whole time within the circle of his arm, wept silently and continually, little spasms shaking her now and then from head to foot. She was like a blown and withering flower holding to its stem with the last shreds of vitality. Narcissa and Julia, swathed in black with awful black crêpe veils shrouding them, seemed two sinister alien spirits, and his Uncle Cyrus in his long frock coat and black cravat, a cadaverous specter.

There followed the mournful procession to the cemetery, he and his mother and uncle in the rickety old surrey immediately behind the hearse, Phineas driving Narcissa and Julia in his sleigh, and in the rear, a heterogeneous collection of sleighs, wagons, sleds, and buggies that wound slowly over the long white road. The cemetery was buried deep in snow, the monuments incrusted thickly with it. The mound of fresh earth by the hole that had been dug to receive his father's body, was the one ugly black spot in the bleak expanse of naked white.

§ 6

The following day, Cyrus Smith directed that the bills connected with his brother's interment should be sent to him, and departed for New York. Sam was sorry to see him go; he seemed to be the only friend left them in the world. Julia prepared to leave, also, but delayed carrying her resolution into effect from day to day, as her mother's condition began to cause them all increasing anxiety. Mrs. Smith would not, or perhaps could not, rally from the shock of her husband's death. All day long she lay in bed, making no effort, uttering no complaint, silently weeping; she resolutely refused all nourishment, piteously imploring her children not to urge it on her. Julia insisted upon sending for a doctor from Boston, but the physician, after taking the dying woman's hand in his for a few moments, merely shook his head gravely.

Twice within the space of three short weeks, death struck at the Mendon farmhouse. Mary Smith, without voicing a complaint, persistently and quietly wept herself out of life. She was conscious to the very end and her last words were: "Sammy, take care of Narciss' . . . 'Booful' Zion, children."

§ 7

Once more their uncle came to them from New York; once more the exhausting ordeal of a funeral was lived through, once more the solicitous neighbors appeared with their condolences and their offers of help; the house smelled oppressively again of many flowers, the dismal cortège made its laggardly way again along the winding road, the black hole in the white world again received its burden. Phineas Holliday was kind, friends and neighbors were kind, everyone was kind. The household work was taken care of by willing sympathetic hands; there was nothing left for Sam and his sisters to do except remind each other of the goodness, patience, love and understanding of those who had left them, and to ask themselves how best they now might face life. In the kitchen stood the utensils,—pots and pans and cutlery,—to which their mother's hands had been long familiar, the orange skins she had been slicing the day before Theophilus had been stricken lay piled upon a platter in the cupboard, a shriveled heap of twisted, drying rinds, the cook-book she sometimes consulted still carried the mark of her flour-powdered fingers. On the hat-rack in the hall hung their father's broad-brimmed hat. The *Christian Union* and the glasses,—the last earthly things his hands had touched,—lay on a small marble-topped table in the upstairs bedroom where some kind neighbor had carried them, the creaky walnut wardrobe bulged with his clothes strong with the scent of his body. But they, of whom these things were but poignant reminders, were gone; they would never return to pick up the dropped threads, to resume the old rôles, to take their places again amid the surroundings so eloquent of their simple, homely lives.

It was the end of the farm, the breaking up of the home, the last of Sam's boyhood. Within a month the place was sold, the stock and old familiar furniture auctioned off, the clothing and personal effects of Theophilus and Mary Smith packed in trunks to be stored in a neighbor's barn.

Narcissa, declining both her sister's pleading to come to Boston, and her uncle's invitation to make her home with him in New York, astonished them all by announcing her intention of marrying Phineas Holliday. The wedding occurred the last day of Sam's stay in Mendon. Encouraged by his uncle, he decided to go to New York and try his luck in the big city.

CHAPTER V

§ 1

It was in the burning summer of 1885 that Sam Smith came to New York. Phineas helped him outfit himself at Framingham before his departure, and advised him in the selection of his ten-dollar suit, his cravat, stand-up collar, derby hat, and stiff, button shoes. Sam feared he looked ridiculous, and was certain he felt uncomfortable. Assured that his get-up was in the latest mode and that such was the manner in which young men in the city dressed, he concluded his was not a type that lent itself to the prevailing fashion. His collar galled his neck, his hat did not seem to fit his head, his clothes were tight and bound his body, his shoes squeaked and hurt his feet.

On the train, racing toward New York, once or twice he thought he detected a covert glance and a nudge on the part of his fellow passengers. He made up his mind to punch the first man he saw laughing at him. Gazing out upon the farms, villages, trees, cows, cities, telegraph poles that hurried nearer and nearer with ever-increasing speed, then flashed past and were gone, it seemed to him that he would gladly forego the opportunity his uncle offered him, which everyone had been at pains to tell him was so wonderful, to be out of these town trappings and back once more on the farm dressed in his comfortable old shirt, patched and faded trousers, worn and battered boots.

The long thundering afternoon followed, a racketing of shrieking iron, groaning wood, and trembling glass. The car grew gritty with dirt, dust, and cinders. Conscious of his wallet in an inner pocket, Sam did not dare remove his coat, and the sweat trickled down his face, gradually melting the collar that lacerated his neck. He felt grimy, hot, tightly bound in clothes, and he was hungry, having eaten nothing since morning except a bag of peanuts which Narcissa had

shoved into his hand at the moment of parting. He dozed in the sticky heat, and presently fell into a hot, uncomfortable sleep.

New York!

The car was astir; people were gathering their wraps and parcels together, lifting down hand-bags and umbrellas from the racks above their heads. He rubbed his eyes, and wet his dry mouth, feeling gummy, dirty, wretched, but there was no time to think of himself. They were in. He struggled with his two valises and got himself half-way into the aisle. The train lurched, stopped, lurched again, trundled and bumped over a network of tracks, slid in between lines of freight cars and empty coaches, and brought itself to a standstill with a shriek of brakes.

Bewildering noise, bewildering crowds, bewildering confusion, the hiss of locomotives, the clanging of bells, the shuffling of thousands of feet,—shouts, voices, hubbub,—echoing, echoing, echoing. A tide swept on carrying him with it. Faces were everywhere, black and white faces, strained and anxious faces, happy and excited faces. A stream of more hurrying people with more bags bore in an opposite direction. The whole world seemed to be travelling.

Gates, lights, jostling, the flash of news-stands and piles of fruit. Suddenly he emerged into white day-lit streets. Noise, racket, bang, smash! It was deafening!

"Cab, sir?" "Carriage, sir?" "Take your bags, sir?" "What hotel, sir?" "Cab?" "Cab?" "Cab?"

He brushed these harpies away, putting his shoulder against them when they pressed too close, clutching tightly the handles of his valises.

§ 2

He lost his way on reaching Twenty-third Street. The avenue he had been following ended abruptly there, for he had made a wrong turning, mistaking Madison for Union Square. Dusk was falling. A huge building brilliant with lights and gay with awninged windows confronted him as soon as he was free of the trees. He identified it, with a thrill, as the famous Fifth Avenue Hotel, of which he had heard all his life. It was here the Presidents and all the famous people of the world stayed when they came to New York.

A policeman re-directed him.

The streets were rapidly growing dark now, the residences were shuttered and silent, no ray of light gleamed from their gloomy interiors. The street lamps flickered uncertainly and cast only a dim radiance. He proceeded warily, glancing behind him now and then, peering into dark recesses, area-ways, and black-mouthed passages. He found comfort in the trundling street cars, dimly lighted, and the clattering horse cabs that occasionally kept him company. Figures he watched narrowly.

His arms aching, his feet in an agony from the stiff buttoned shoes, hungry and weary, Union Square at last came into view. Here it was brisk and lively, lights and laughter, people sauntering up and down or resting on the benches in the deep shadows under the heavy foliage.

He had no further difficulty in finding his street. A block and a half eastward he came upon the number,—black, bold figures silhouetted upon the curtained transom over the door. With a heart that thumped in his breast, he ascended the stairs and rang the bell.

§ 3

A butler came to the door,—a lachrymose individual in a flappy, dingy dress suit. Sam had heard his uncle speak of Meggs and of Marty, the man's wife, who did the cooking. Through the open doorway, he saw a stone flagged hall, a stairway on the right, its carpet protected by a narrow strip of brown holland held in place at each tread by a steel rod, a dark passage beyond, a wavering gas jet in an art globe spotted with colored glass blisters, and a walnut hat-rack of many mirrors and little shelves. Uncle Cyrus lived in much grander style than his nephew had supposed.

The butler looked at the late arrival doubtfully.

"Is he expecting you, sir?"

"He's my uncle; tell him it's Sam Smith from Mendon."

The man allowed him to engineer his bulky valises within, while he lit the gas in the parlor, where Sam followed.

The room, illy illumined by the one jet, was high-ceilinged, long, narrow, and crowded with chairs and sofas swathed in white cotton covers. Brass fixtures above the windows and

doors indicated where curtains hung during winter; the windows were shuttered with hinged wooden blinds, at present closed and hasped. There was a musty, unpleasant smell in the unventilated room. A heavy gilt-framed mirror stood above the white marble fireplace. This and the pictures on the walls, also framed in heavy gilt, were covered with white netting stretched across their faces. Backed into a corner loomed a bulky, oak-cased melodeon. On the center table lay a thick bulky Bible with the ends of two fringed book-marks dangling from its closed leaves.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs. Meggs passed through the hall and in a moment Sam's uncle came into the room with hands outstretched. The boy in the gladness of his heart at seeing him, grinned uncertainly, and felt his chin and lips twitch. There was much about his uncle that suggested his father.

"Well, boy, you're here at last. I didn't expect you so soon,—thought perhaps you'd wait until the hot weather was over."

There was nothing wanting in his uncle's greeting.

Sam explained about the quick sale of the farm.

"I thought maybe the sooner I got something to do, the better," he observed.

"I see; . . . well, we'll look 'round; perhaps we'll find something for you. Summer's a bad time, you know. But never mind about that now; come up and meet your aunt."

They ascended to the floor above, Sam following the other's tall, gaunt figure.

A greenish light pervaded the front room upstairs from a gas-lamp surmounted by a green shade that burned on a center table. A tall, white spectral woman rose to greet the boy as he entered; another white figure hovered in the shadow beyond her.

"Sarah, this is Sam,—Thee's boy."

His aunt gave him a bony hand and offered a cool, lifeless cheek for his kiss. Sam managed it awkwardly.

"How do you do, Sam?" Her voice was wintry. "Light the light, Cyrus, and let's have a look at him."

When the gas caught and flared, all eyes centered on the newcomer for a minute or two, and no one spoke. Sam glimpsed the other white figure: a girl, sixteen or seventeen

years old. He felt keenly the absurdity of his clothes and appearance.

"Come, sit down," directed his aunt, "and tell us how you left things up at Mendon? Did your sister marry that young man? Is he a nice fellow? About how old? Has he any prospects?"

Sam floundered with his answers; he could not find his tongue, his aunt frightened him.

She was a tall woman, large and towering, with a white face and white hair; her white costume of scalloped sacque and long trailing piqué skirt, made the total effect of her snowy appearance overpowering. There was no red in her lips nor color in her cheeks; her face was pasty and faintly wrinkled; the boy was vaguely conscious of her bony wrists and large feet.

Presently he was introduced to the girl who still hung in the background. This was Ruth. He had already guessed as much, though he had not realized she was so old. Her face was round and she had coils of dark hair, while her eyes, which were dark, too, stared at Sam the whole time. Not once did she offer a comment or utter a word. But his uncle and aunt had no mercy upon him with their questions. How much did the farm bring? The money had been divided between the two sisters, had it? What was done with his father's and mother's effects? Was Julia happy? Did she like Boston? How much salary did she earn? And Narcissa,—Mr. Holliday had a good business, had he? They were going to live in Framingham? What did Sam suppose Mr. Holliday to be worth? Narcissa might be quite comfortable some day, mightn't she?

"And what do you expect to make of yourself?" his aunt asked, her bony wrists crossed in her lap. Every detail about her nephew received her searching inspection. Before he could find words to answer one question, she had another ready for him.

"Are you a professed Christian?"

Sam did not know what she meant by "professed Christian."

"They were all Congregationalists up there," his uncle replied for him. "You went to church regularly in Mendon, didn't you, Sam?"

"Well, sir, when the farm work permitted me, I did."

"Thee was always rather lax about religion, but I think Mary had principles," Uncle Cyrus observed.

"Pa believed in God," Sam said resolutely and produced an unexpected pause.

"We're all good Christians here," said his aunt with austerity, "or at least we try to be." She repeated her earlier question:

"What do you plan to do for yourself?"

Again his uncle came to the boy's rescue.

"Mr. Wright thought he could get something for him," he said. To Sam he explained: "Mr. Baldwin Wright is one of the leading lights in our church; he's our treasurer and an Elder,—a splendid man, devoted to his work. He conducts one of the largest Young Men's Bible Classes in New York. I hope you will feel like joining it. He's interested in young men and young men's problems."

"Your uncle is also an Elder," Aunt Sarah put in with a touch of pride.

"We have a brilliant pastor," Cyrus said, after a deprecating cough. "You've heard of Dr. McIntosh? . . . Well, perhaps not in Mendon,—but he's a very eloquent man, very eloquent, indeed.

"I spoke to Mr. Baldwin Wright concerning you," he continued; "he thought he could find you something. You know New York is flooded with young men; it's a great place for climbing the ladder and everyone wants a chance. You mustn't expect much to begin with."

"Oh, I shan't," Sam assured him.

"Humble beginnings often make fine endings," his uncle stated.

"Yes, sir," Sam agreed.

"We have a spare bedroom on the upper floor," his aunt told him. "We want you to make your home with us until you're settled."

Sam thanked her; it was awfully good of them to be so kind to him. He wondered about something to eat; he was famished. The clock on the marble mantel pointed to after nine. He guessed that supper must be well over and the servants gone out or in bed. He did not dare suggest food. Perhaps there was a restaurant in the neighborhood. He hesitated to suggest that either.

"I shall want to have a talk with you about your religious

convictions," Aunt Sarah said. "I suppose you're too tired now after your long trip, but perhaps we can manage it in the morning."

"Your father didn't take your religious training very much to heart?" his uncle asked, and to Sam's doubtful negative, he added: "That's just it,—that's just it."

"But do you consider yourself a true Congregationalist, satisfied with the soundness of all their doctrines?" pursued his aunt. Sam blinked at her, trying to hide a yawn that threatened to wrench open his jaw.

"Come, come, this won't do," she said briskly. "The poor boy's dead tired and here we're plaguing him with questions about his faith. Did you bring some luggage? Well, get it and I'll see to your room. Ruth, fetch me a fresh towel from the linen closet."

Sam went downstairs for his valises, grasped their handles once more, and staggered with them up to the third floor. He was out of breath by the time he reached the top. In a room at the back of the house, he found his aunt and Ruth busily arranging and tidying it for his occupancy. The girl vanished as soon as he appeared. It was a good-sized room with a low ceiling that had settled perceptibly toward one side, an uneven floor of wide dark-painted boards, and two windows that were open now to allow what cool night air there was to enter, for it was hot under the roof. There were some chairs, a low, sagging double-bed, an oval marble-topped table, a wash-stand with basin and ewer, a dresser with a cracked mirror, and in the corner a cretonne curtain tacked to a high shelf to conceal clothing. All the furniture was of light varnished pine. On the table, a gas drop-light fitted with a blackened Welsbach burner, lit the room with garish white.

"There now," said his aunt, drawing the shades at the windows, "I hope you'll be comfortable. The bathroom's on the floor below at the head of the stairs. . . . Do you think there's anything else you'll need?"

Sam thought despairingly of food, but he lied bravely.

"We breakfast at seven-thirty and we always try to be prompt as your uncle has to be early at his office. . . . I hope you don't neglect to say your prayers; you know we never get too old for that."

Sam bade his aunt good night. She gave the room one

more brief inspection, then went out, closing the door behind her. The flooring creaked under her weight as she crossed the narrow hall and went heavily downstairs.

Turning to one of the windows, the boy jerked up the shade and leaned out. The summer night was alive with noises. The rears of a dozen houses abutted upon his own, windows and kitchen doorways here and there bright with light. Occasionally, laughter could be heard and there was a constant low babble of voices with now and then a woman's high-pitched tones. Down in the dark of the double row of yards, on the stoops outside the kitchens and underneath the thick screening foliage of sheltering trees, gossip and love-making were going on. The night smelled of hot tin roofs cooling, of tar, dry ashes, and stale cooking. Men and women in various stages of undress appeared and disappeared at uncurtained windows, and where the shades were drawn, now and then a giant shadow was thrown upon the screen with huge distorted arms and hands. At some distance a cornetist practised mournfully while from the street a hurdy-gurdy added its merry tinkle. Around and above all, enveloping and engulfing everything, hummed and zummed the murmur of the vast city.

§ 4

At breakfast the next morning Sam had a good look at Ruth. The dining-room was in the basement, directly beneath the parlor, its windows facing the area-way beside the front steps which rose from the street to the front door on the floor above. Behind the dining-room was the kitchen and the two rooms were divided by a pantry equipped with a swing door through which Meggs in his flapping dress suit continually passed. The butler and his wife, Sam learned, occupied the front room on the same floor as his own.

Ruth had a pleasant, almost round face, and her complexion was quite dark. She had singularly heavy eyebrows for a girl, dark lashes, and dark unhesitating eyes that had a directness of stare often disconcerting. Her expression was earnest, perhaps too serious; there was no lightness or mirth in it. But Sam liked her. Almost at once he was conscious of companionship, youth instinctively reaching out to youth in an atmosphere of age and dry opinions.

A lengthy grace, reverently pronounced by Uncle Cyrus, preceded breakfast. Sam, ravenous, could hardly wait until he had finished. Inadvertently, he admitted he had gone supperless to bed, had, in fact, eaten nothing since the previous morning. His aunt immediately became agitated; the feeling she displayed was wholly unexpected and embarrassing; he was taken aback by her heat.

"Why, you silly boy," she said reprovingly, "what did you want to do a thing like that for? Marty was right here and either she or Meggs could have got you something. *I* could for that matter,—or Ruth. There's always enough to eat in the house. Why didn't you *tell* us?"

Her nephew flamed darkly under her attack; he twisted his jaw and stared into his coffee cup.

"You should have said something about it, Sam," his uncle put in more mildly. "It was very natural for your aunt to suppose you had had something to eat at the station when you arrived——"

"Why, it was eight o'clock and *after* when you got here! How was I to imagine? . . . You should have mentioned it. . . ."

"Look, Aunt Sarah, there's our old organ grinder," Ruth interrupted. A doleful tune from wooden reeds slightly off key began just outside in the street. The baggy pantaloons, the staff that supported the organ, and the revolving hand of the man could be seen through the upper uncurtained half of the window. Sam cast a quick glance at the girl, suspecting her words had been meant to divert his aunt's attention. For just a fraction of a second he caught her dark eyes and from that moment he felt she was a friend.

"He'll get nothing more from me," Aunt Sarah stated with firmness. "He's been coming 'round here for years every Saturday morning and sometimes I've given him a few coppers. But I'm done; he gets not another cent."

"I have some pennies," Ruth said. She half rose from her seat as if to bring them, but her aunt pointed her firmly back to her chair.

"You sit right there," she directed. "If you have any pennies you can give them to Mr. Wright for the church fund."

Ruth subsided, the music wheezed on, and Aunt Sarah explained that the church was in debt and that Dr. McIntosh

had started a campaign among his parishioners to raise the necessary money.

"I want you to visit Mr. Wright's Bible Class to-morrow," Sam's uncle said to him, "and perhaps you'll feel like joining it by and by; you couldn't make a better impression upon Mr. Wright than by expressing a desire to do so."

"Yes, sir," said Sam.

At the conclusion of breakfast, the family rose, and Cyrus led them upstairs to the parlor for prayers. Here Aunt Sarah fitted on her iron-rimmed spectacles and established herself at the table and opened the bulky Bible; her husband and Ruth disposed themselves on chairs near by and Sam followed suit.

"We're in Deuteronomy," Aunt Sarah explained; "a chapter a morning, and I've read this Holy Book aloud six times from cover to cover."

She began to read in a cold expressionless voice. When she had finished, the family knelt, and Uncle Cyrus offered prayer. He prayed for grace and guidance, offered fervent thanks for past and present mercies, and besought the Almighty's blessings first upon himself and his wife, then upon Ruth, and finally upon "the young man who has come to the marts of the great city, seeking new fields of endeavor, yet bowed with the weight of surpassing grief, bereft of his loving parents whom Thou in Thy infinite wisdom hast seen fit to gather unto their heavenly home; may he be temperate in all his habits, may he turn a deaf ear and an unseeing eye upon the wiles of the devil, may he guard himself against the pitfalls that will beset his path, may his faith become ever more steadfast and unfaltering, and in the hour of need may he turn to Thy divine . . ."

There was a great deal more of it. Sam was acutely self-conscious at the beginning, but after awhile the earnestness in his uncle's voice moved him. Every word of the fervent prayer was sincere; he had not suspected his uncle cared so much about him. He did not say "Amen" with the others, but there was an honest wish in his heart, as he rose from his knees, that meant the same thing.

"I don't think I've written in here the sad items of your father's and mother's deaths," Cyrus said, turning to the table on which the large Bible lay. "Nor Narcissa's marriage," he added.

He opened the book and showed Sam a dozen gilt, illumined, stiff pages in its center bearing on different leaves the titles: "Births," "Baptisms," "Marriages," "Deaths."

"The family's all in here," he informed him. "This was your great-grandfather's Bible; see his elegant handwriting. That was Perries Joshua Smith, and here is the marriage of his parents: Noah and Abigail Smith. Here is your own birth: April ninth, 1865, and here are all your brothers and sisters: James, Lawrence, Julia, Jonathan, and Narcissa. The passing of your older brothers, James, Lawrence, and Jonathan, are recorded under 'Deaths' and now it must be my sad duty to add the names of your dear father and mother. . . . I wish you'd remind me of that this evening, Sarah; after dinner will be the time. . . . You'll take a look around the city perhaps to-day, Sam, and to-morrow we'll speak to Mr. Wright. I must be off to my office now."

§ 5

Later in the morning, Aunt Sarah called her nephew to come down from his room where he had been unpacking and arranging his meager possessions, for the talk she had mentioned the previous evening. The boy had no inkling of her purpose, and it was no clearer to him after she had been talking to him for some time. She spoke about articles of religion, tenets of faith, doctrines and creeds, and underlying principles of Christianity.

He had never given any serious thought to the matter of religion. As a boy he had gone with Narcissa to the Congregational Sunday-school, and had hated it because his teacher, —a tittering old maid who came from Milford,—insisted upon kissing him every once in so often. His mother frequently went to church and sometimes his father. But with the decline of their fortunes, his parents had gone less and less, principally because there was always so much work to be done at home. Religion, as he remembered, had been little discussed in the Mendon farmhouse. The question of any one of the family having "doubts" had never arisen. He had been too much absorbed with his tasks to give any consideration to what his aunt now called "tenets of faith." What did he believe? He did not know.

His inquisitor poked and prodded and probed into his mind, but she arrived nowhere. Sam was ready to answer "yes" or "no" whenever he considered an affirmative or a negative was in order. When she inquired whether he was contented in the Congregational Church, entirely satisfied with all its doctrines, he answered "Yes," but when this produced a hurt and disappointed look in her face, he hastily corrected himself and answered "no"; and when she asked him if he didn't think he would be happier in embracing another creed of truer and more Christian principles, and he said "yes," she was elated with an unexpected and bewildering joy.

"Then you'll *join our church*, Sam, and stand up before Dr. McIntosh as soon as he comes home, and all the congregation and publicly declare your intention to embrace Christ's *true* teachings?" Her wintry voice actually trembled with eagerness.

Sam looked into her colorless eyes; he wanted to please her; he could see she hoped he would consent, so cheerfully he agreed. She startled him upon this, by suddenly leaning forward and pressing her lips to his cheek.

"You're a *dear,* good boy," she said with warmth.

That evening she announced triumphantly to her husband that she had made a convert.

CHAPTER VI

§ 1

His first day in New York, Sam spent wandering about the city, locating Broadway and Fifth Avenue, and walking down as far as the Battery for a good look at the harbor. He avoided the Bowery, a street he imagined to be lined with dens of vice, brothels, and gambling hells, where no stranger could consider himself safe. New York appalled him; he was astonished by what he saw far more than he expected; he could not accustom himself to the roar of the traffic, to the hurrying, elbowing crowds on the streets.

Sunday followed. It was the first Sunday in the month, and it was Uncle Cyrus's duty that morning to prepare the communion bread. Another Elder from the church arrived shortly after nine o'clock, and Aunt Sarah produced the loaves she had purchased at a special bakery the day before. Sam was impressed with the neat way his uncle first shaved off the crusts and when the loaf had the shape of a brick, cut it into thin slices one way and then turned it the other and cut it crosswise without disturbing the little cubes the slicing created. The loaf was then carefully bound up in a damp napkin.

At half past ten, Aunt Sarah appeared in the upstairs sitting-room, hatted, cloaked, gloved, and ready for church. She was rather majestic in her black pelisse edged with tiny balls of chenille, her black velvet bonnet and white kid gloves. Beside her Ruth appeared clad in sober brown with a brown straw hat trimmed with corn flowers. Sam had been absorbed in the *Herald,* astonished by the number of its pages and the space that was apparently wasted in advertisements. At sight of the two women he bounded upstairs for his derby hat, gave his hair a hasty, upward brush, and joined his aunt and her niece in the lower entry hall. Uncle Cyrus had gone on half-an-hour previously, carrying the communion bread to church.

It was another scorching day, but the distance was not great. The avenue was dotted with Sunday worshipers on their way to service, and Sam's attention was drawn to the tall silk hats worn by the men, their Prince Albert coats, and shiny patent-leather shoes.

The church when they reached it struck him as bare and uninviting. It had none of the simple intimacy of the Congregational Church at Mendon. It was a vast place with curving rows of light-brown varnished seats, fitted with dull red cushions of tufted rep. Around three sides ran a balcony and on the fourth, above the pulpit, was the organ loft and the gold pipes of the organ. These were humming softly as Sam, Ruth, and their aunt made their way down the slight incline of the aisle. Everywhere people were finding their seats, fans were fluttering, and occasional sibilant voices whispering.

Aunt Sarah arranged the party in the long seat.

"I'll go in first, then Ruth, and then you, Sam,—your uncle last. He always prefers the end seat."

He appeared presently and sat down, without granting his family a sign of recognition. After a moment he bent his head against the back of the pew in front of him, a hand covering his eyes, and prayed.

An air of solemnity pervaded the church. Sam stared at the tall, stained-glass windows, the cushion-topped pulpit, and the three throne-like chairs upon the dais behind it, at the people bustling to their seats, and the ushers hurrying up and down the aisles piloting newcomers to vacant pews. Up behind the curtain of the organ loft, he could catch an occasional glimpse of the heads of the four members of the choir, and could see them sorting music and leaning toward one another in conference.

During a hush, a side door opened and a minister in a frock coat and a black gown, carrying a book and papers, appeared, mounted the dais, and established himself in the center throne chair.

Sam's uncle leaned toward his nephew, cupping his hand about his mouth.

"Dr. McIntosh's 'way on his vacation. This man's from Buffalo. Invited."

Sam nodded. The minister rose, came to the pulpit, arranged his book and papers, looked about the church and

raised his hand. With a great rustling and commotion, the congregation got down upon its knees.

§ 2

Uncle Cyrus had a class of some twenty young girls in the Sunday-school which assembled at one o'clock in the Parlors beneath the church proper, and Ruth, too, had a class of her own,—half a dozen boys of six or seven years of age. The Young Men's Bible Class under Mr. Baldwin Wright also met at this hour. The class was considered part of the Sunday-school but assembled in a room separate from the main large one. The latter was a tremendous chamber quite as large if not larger than the body of the church directly above it. Sam was astonished by its size and the bustle that pervaded it when he and his uncle entered through the nail-studded leather-covered swing-doors beneath the stairway which divided on either side and led from the main entrance to the church floor above.

The Sunday-school had not as yet been called to order, as there were still lacking a few minutes of one o'clock. The place was alive with boys and girls, each dressed in his or her best, with older people who had gathered together in groups and, now and then, bowed or called in cheerful voices to acquaintances in other parts of the room. At one side was a stage on which stood the Superintendent's desk and behind this against the wall hung a great map of Palestine. Near by upon an easel was a large thick book of colored pictures, opened at a scene representing the wedding feast at Cana, and beneath in large letters, the words: "Jesus turneth the water into wine." The main floor of the great room was crowded with small square tables each one stacked with a neat pile of red-covered hymnals, and the center of a circle of from six to ten chairs. Here and there on tasseled standards floated gorgeous banners of colored silk on which appeared beautifully embroidered silver stars, white doves, shining crosses, and illumined Biblical texts.

Sam's uncle weaved an unceremonious way, and through the crowd, towards a door on the opposite side. Sam followed as best he could, observing that almost everyone tried to win his uncle's nod and smile of recognition. He began to appre-

ciate that his father's brother was a very important man in this environment,—an Elder, one of the pillars of the church, "Brother" Smith, some of these acquaintances called him. But the Elder was in a hurry to-day and had no time to waste in exchanging compliments or in discussing church affairs. He wanted to get his nephew into Mr. Wright's hands in time for his colleague to have a little chat with the boy.

They found Mr. Wright in his classroom, the center of a handful of students whom he promptly waved aside as soon as his eye fell upon Elder Smith and his nephew. He was a large man of ample girth with a jovial face and smile. He took Sam by both arms and studied him with a beaming expression as he discussed him with his uncle.

"A fine boy, Cyrus,—yes, sir, a fine boy. He's got some good brawny muscles on him and an honest face. He'll do well,—mark my word. You know these country fellows have a much better start than our city ones. They get stamina out there in the fields; they're active; they have to work; they don't need gymnasiums or baseball to whip their young blood to the pace God intended it to flow. Give me a boy brought up on a farm every time. . . . We'll see to this young man's morals, give him a few working principles, a love of Jesus Christ, then turn him loose, and the world will be better off. It's boys like this young man here that are the hope of the nation. Once they get the spirit of Almighty God in their hearts, they can't go wrong. They're the standard-bearers of civilization,—Christ's soldiers."

He shook Sam affectionately in his grasp.

"You remember I spoke to you about a position for my nephew," said Cyrus, rubbing his lean chin. "The boy's anxious to get to work. He's honest and I think God-fearing. . . ."

"I'm sure of it,—sure of it!" Mr. Wright agreed heartily.

"I wish I could use him myself,—but I don't think it's a good thing to have him so closely associated."

"Of course not—o' course not." Mr. Wright frowned and smiled at Sam at the same time; he slipped an arm half round his shoulders. "I think I can place him; believe I know just the niche for him,—a man that'll be glad to give him the chance I have no doubt he richly deserves. I'll see about it to-morrow."

"Sam has decided he wants to join the church."

"Splendid! Splendid! He looks like a boy with high ideals."

"I thought maybe if he came to see you in the evening, or perhaps after prayer meetings, you could give him some private instruction. He's a little old for the instruction class."

"Certainly,—certainly," Mr. Wright agreed. "We'll straighten him out and set his doubts at rest,—if he has any. . . . I like his looks, Cyrus. Look at those shoulders! You don't find them on any city-bred boy! And those biceps! Why, they stick out like rocks and I'll bet they're as hard. He's going to be one of *my* boys, aren't you, Sam?" He clapped the young man on the shoulder and jerked him against his big frame in a kind of clumsy bear hug. "I'll take him in charge and some day, Cyrus, you'll be proud——"

A ringing gong sounded and there was an immediate stir.

"Well, that's school. I must run along to my class. I'll leave the boy with you, and I'll see you, Sam, directly afterwards," and with these words Elder Smith hurried away.

Of Mr. Wright's Young Men's Bible Class, some twenty individuals were present on this particular Sunday. There were three times that number during the winter months, the new member was informed. Sam did not quite see how it deserved its name; there were only two or three boys approximately his own age in the room, the rest gray-headed men or youths of thirteen and fourteen.

Following the clang of the gong, there had been a general scraping of chairs as the class seated itself. Sam standing beside Mr. Wright's desk felt embarrassed, conscious of the curious eyes studying him. Mr. Wright now plunged him into an agony of confusion by putting his arm about his shoulders, swinging him round to face the class, and formally introducing him.

"Boys," he said in his genial radiant voice, "I have a new member for you. This is Samuel Smith,—Elder Smith's nephew. Boys, meet Sam Smith. He's going to be one of our standard-bearers before we're done with him. . . . Adrian Lane, make a place there beside you for Sam Smith and show him the hymns and the lesson."

Somebody in the group before him moved and Sam blindly made his way in that direction, stumbling over knees and feet as he slid between the rows of chairs to the seat indicated. A glance showed him Adrian Lane to be about his own age,—a boy with a pale, rather sickly face and large dark eyes,

who smiled with hesitation as Sam sat down, and pushed an open book toward him.

"Tom," said Mr. Wright from the front of the room to the slightly bald person seated at the little organ, "we'll begin with Hymn 206, 'God Jehovah, now on high, We Thy children glorify.' Now, boys, I want you to sing this with vim and show our new member how you can do it. We aren't very many of us here to-day, but that isn't going to make any difference. Mr. Jennings sometimes says we sing too loud in here and disturb the Sunday-school; well, let's disturb them *good* to-day. Come on, now."

The class rose and began to sing. At once Sam was conscious of the finely trained quality of his neighbor's voice. This sickly, pale youth sang with expression and his clear young voice rang out above the others. Sam admired him for his complete confidence; he noticed the young man's hands were slim and very white and that his nails were long and well-kept. It made him ashamed of his own which were blunt, broken, and none too clean.

At the close of the hymn, the class settled down again into its seats and Mr. Wright took up the lesson.

§ 3

Sam was aware he was hungry again as the Bible Class dispersed.

"See you soon, Sam," Mr. Wright called to him as he was edging an exit with some others through the narrow door into the larger room. A little group formed around the teacher immediately after the class broke up, and Sam hesitated about attracting his new friend's attention. But the latter had an eye out for him.

"Uncle's been detained," Ruth said as he joined her. "They had to decide on next Sunday's preacher right away, it seems, and a meeting of the Elders was called. He said for me to wait for you. I daresay he'll be late for dinner. Aunt Sarah went home long ago; she never stays after church is over."

As they reached the street the glint of afternoon light in the sunshine made Sam ask:

"What time is it?"

"It's after two, I imagine. They're supposed to end at two,

but they never do. It's quarter after, sometimes twenty minutes, before they start home. Everybody likes to stop and chat awhile. I've known Uncle sometimes to be half-an-hour late. Aunt Sarah won't wait for him. She has dinner,—we have dinner in the middle of the day on Sundays,—at three o'clock, and if he isn't home then, we go ahead without him. It's Meggs' and Marty's afternoon off, you know, and if we're late, they don't get away on time."

"They don't have much of an afternoon," Sam observed.

"They call it that, anyway. They're out of the house certainly not later than five, and they have from that time on until—well, until they come home. . . . I grow frightfully hungry on Sundays with such a late dinner."

"I'm actually starved," Sam said with energy. He turned abruptly toward her, and continued: "That was an awful nice thing you did yesterday morning,—switching my aunt off me. I thought what I had done would please her; I didn't want to cause her any extra trouble, you know, in getting me something to eat."

"Aunt Sarah's terribly sensitive and she felt herself to blame, I daresay, for not having thought to offer you something. I know her pretty well, and she was trying to justify the omission by putting the fault on you. She's really very kind, but she hates to admit herself in the wrong."

Sam glanced at the girl. She used rather unusual words, he thought, and to-day showed she had plenty of spirit.

"Did you go much to school?" he asked.

"I went a year to High, but it was too far away. I read a great deal and study French. How did you like the Bible Class?"

"Oh, fine. Mr. Wright's a mighty nice man, isn't he? He seemed to be quite friendly and said he'd try to find me a position."

"He's awfully fond of young men. He'll do anything in the world for you if you're in trouble. The boys all say they adore him. He has quite a number of them up in his rooms on Stuyvesant Square two or three times a month, —perhaps it's once a week,—and they have wonderfully good times. Did you meet Adrian Lane? Did you like him? He has the most gorgeous voice; he's studying for grand opera and Mr. Wright, Uncle says, is paying for all his music lessons. We have Church Socials once in awhile in the Sunday-

school Parlors on Saturday evenings and they really are quite good fun. It's summer now and we won't have one for some time, but they're talking about a picnic for the children."

"How long have you had a Sunday-school class?" She seemed young for one, Sam thought.

"I was in Uncle Cyrus's class ever since—well, ever since I was ten years old, and when Mr. Jennings called for teachers during the campaign for more scholars last year, Uncle said I was qualified to volunteer. My boys are darlings. I'd like you to come over to our corner next Sunday and meet them. Aunt Sarah suggested the greatest scheme to keep them interested. Each was given a blank book on Christmas and during this year they have to write in it every kind act they see or hear about, and next Christmas there are to be prizes. Uncle has offered a silver watch."

When they had almost reached home, a hurried step behind them and the sound of Sam's name brought them to a halt. It was Uncle Cyrus. He had been walking rapidly to catch up with them and now his lean face was frankly wet with perspiration. He was in excellent spirits.

"Well, my boy," he said, panting a little, "how do you like us? Fine spirit pretty evident, don't you think? I have a splendid report of you from Baldwin Wright. You've made quite an impression upon him and he'll stand you a good friend if you take his fancy. He's done a great deal for a number of young men. You know he's quite well-off; a confirmed bachelor and a splendid God-fearing, up-standing Christian. He's a tower of strength to us, is Baldwin Wright. He stopped me as I was leaving church and spoke to me about you, suggested I bring you round to-night for evening service so he can have a walk and talk with you afterwards. I should certainly advise it, for Baldwin Wright is a big man; he's influential."

They reached the steps of the house. The top of Meggs' head and his sorrowful eyes just above the curtain rod of a dining-room window showed he had been watching for them.

"We must be late," said Uncle Cyrus with a hasty glance at his watch and a worried tone. "No, it's only ten to three."

"It's their afternoon out," Ruth reminded him.

"Ah, that's it!" said her uncle.

They mounted the steps and Cyrus opened the front door with his latch-key.

§ 4

"Do you like to walk?" asked Mr. Wright as he and Sam emerged from the little crowd of worshipers that flocked out of the church after the evening service.

The night was sultry but the heavens clear, the streets deserted except for the dispersing congregation. On either side the Avenue, the flickering gas lamps formed converging lines of light. Uptown a glow appeared upon the façades of the taller buildings and was reflected hazily on the murky air; a faint almost indistinguishable hum could be sensed rather than heard. The stained-glass windows of the church were rich patterns of royal reds, purples, and dark blues, and as Sam and his companions started upon their short walk, the strains of the organ followed them with deep sobbing notes. The boy was conscious of a strong feeling of spiritual up-lift after his day of devotion. He was tired but happily so.

Mr. Wright entertained him now as they set out, with talk about New York. He was a great admirer of the city; he expanded upon its rapid growth, its enterprise, its wealth. He made some astonishing statements about the Vanderbilts and Astors and other rich families, and told Sam how they had amassed their great fortunes in a comparatively short number of years, many of them starting from nothing.

"You can do it, too, if you want to, my boy," Mr. Wright told him. "Thrift, honest living and dealing are all you need. You can be as rich as they are by the time you're middle-aged if you set your mind to it."

Sam gave a nervous, incredulous laugh, but Mr. Wright was in earnest. He dilated upon the opportunities New York afforded, spoke of the simple need of common sense in meeting them.

"Guess all the big opportunities are about over," Sam said doubtfully. "I don't think a young man has the same chance to-day that those fellows had."

Mr. Wright ridiculed this in easy good humor. He told of a dozen men he knew, already on their way to great wealth and position.

"No—no, my boy, you have just as much chance as any of them. It's character that does it. You weave a little strand every day of your life and if you braid these together, they

soon become a rope and, before you know it, a cable. Habit makes character and character makes destiny. I wish you could hear Dr. McIntosh on this subject; he preached one of the most inspiring sermons I ever listened to in my life on that theme. . . . Well, here we are at my little diggings. Come up and have a look at them."

They had arrived at a square with an iron-fenced garden in its center. Ascending the steps of a brownstone house, Mr. Wright fumbled with his keys, opened a heavy glass-paneled door, and then led the way up more stairs to a second door on the floor above.

"Wait just a moment, till I scratch a match and light up. . . . Now come in, won't you, and make yourself at home. . . ."

Sam entered a large front room with white woodwork, low shelves crowded with books on three sides, and above these upon the wall a cool gray cartridge paper on which were a few large photographs and a multitude of smaller ones. In one corner stood a grand piano.

"Take a look round," his host suggested. "I'll just step into my bedroom and slip out of this tight coat." He disappeared toward the back and Sam did as he was bidden. The large photographs were of celebrated paintings and frescoes, the smaller ones of men, mostly those in their early twenties.

"Ah, you're looking at some of my boys," said Mr. Wright rejoining his guest. He had changed his coat, Sam noted, to a velvet smoking jacket. "This one is an interesting lad," he said picking up a framed photograph from the top of the bookcase. "A derelict, do you know that, Sam? A waif. He doesn't look it there, does he? I ran across him through a mutual friend; I helped him a little, gave him some good sound advice, straightened him out, and to-day he's manager of a dry goods store over in Brooklyn. . . . This one was a kind of a genius, wanted to write poetry, wanted to express himself somehow. He eventually went on the stage and I fear has been running after women. I fear for him, Sam. I wish I knew what has become of him. He's handsome, isn't he? . . . Here's a fine fellow," he pointed to another portrait; "he's one of my Bible Class boys. He's married now and has two children. . . ."

The inventory went on for some time. An anecdote gave each picture personality.

"You see these are my friends, Sam," said Mr. Wright; "people sometimes call me a lonely old bachelor, but I'm never lonely. In the winter when the grate there is full of glowing coals I sit down before my fire and I have a strange feeling that all these boys of mine come back and are nodding and talking to me from their picture-frames. I know where most of them are, they write me all about their troubles; I'm like a father confessor to them. . . . Well, well, I'm talking too much about myself and I brought you up here to talk about you. Now pull up that easy chair by the window and I'll take this one and we'll look out over the lights of New York and you shall tell me all about yourself."

Sam was by nature close-mouthed, and as yet not altogether won to Mr. Baldwin Wright for all his friendliness. But he answered his host's questions without reservation, though he went no further. The man drew from him the story of his brothers' deaths, Julia's adventure in Boston, Narcissa's wedding, the struggle his father and mother had unsuccessfully made to make the farm pay. When it came to the death of his parents, the boy shied at Mr. Wright's sympathy; it was too close as yet to talk about.

"Ah, sorrow, Sam, sorrow! It's sometimes hard to understand the ways of Almighty God, there's so much suffering in the world. I can guess how much you loved your dear father and your dear sweet old mother. There's nothing like a mother, is there, Sam? But we all have to lose them, we all have to say good-bye to their dear old eyes and white hair. 'The Mothers of Men!' What a wonderful phrase that is! I have a poem somewhere among my books with that title and some day I'll read it to you. Not now; you want to talk to me about your mother, I know. You're only twenty and you've just lost your mother! That's hard—that's *mighty* hard! But you'll see her again one of these days,—you believe that, don't you, my boy? It isn't for eternity that you're to be separated from her. She's waiting for you up there, and she's watching over you, praying for you. . . ."

Sam stirred uneasily.

"Sit still, sit still," urged Mr. Wright with a detaining hand upon his arm; "I know just how you feel; you don't like anyone to talk about her yet. Your heart's still too grievously hurt even for the gentlest touch. Yes—yes, I know. That dear mother of yours was all your life to you and now that she's

gone, you're groping about blindly for someone to take her place. We never can find that someone, can we, Sam? No one to take a mother's place, no one with the same understanding, the same sweet sympathy, the same encompassing love. But if you need a friend, here's my hand. I have not much to offer, but such as I have it is yours. 'Silver and gold, have I none, but such as I have, give I unto thee!' Our apostle's words, Sam; wonderful words, aren't they? Don't they represent the epitome of generous friendship, of true hospitality? . . ."

Mr. Wright rambled on in his fluent, mellifluous voice, but the boy's thoughts wandered. The gas had been lowered just before they sat down, and the room behind them was in semi-darkness. Both windows were pushed open as far as possible, their net curtains looped back over the corners of picture frames on either wall to unobstruct the view. Outside in the night, beyond the still, faintly glimmering foliage below, lay the city like a slumbering animal covered with a black robe.

Sam moved with a start. He realized he had momentarily been asleep and that Mr. Wright had asked a question.

"Will you join me in a little snack?" his host repeated and when Sam hastily declined, overbore him with insistence.

"You mustn't say no; that doesn't go here; none of my boys ever say no to that. We always have little feasts; that's part of the fun. I generally have a bite just before I go to bed and I like company. Come along, now, we'll go into the dining-room and I'll see what I can forage for us both out in my larder."

He took Sam by the arm and piloted him into the next room.

"I'm my own cook here so there's no danger of anybody's feelings being hurt if the ice-box is robbed," he said with a playful squeeze.

He left his guest for a few minutes and returned with plates of cold ham, cheese, and crackers.

"You see I have everything ready." He set the food on the table and after one or two more trips for accessories, sat down. He offered Sam beer, but the boy preferred milk.

"That's the stuff, Sam," his host approved; "keep away from intoxicants if you want to get on in this world. I confess I enjoy a bottle or two of beer before retiring. My doctor really advises it. . . . And Sam, if you promise you won't tell on me,—not your uncle or anybody,—I'll confide to

you another shortcoming of mine: I *smoke!* It isn't known down there at the church because, you see, it might be considered by some of the brethren whose noses are especially blue, that I was setting a bad example to my class. . . . But I indulge myself only in an occasional cigar."

He rose as he spoke, opened a drawer in the sideboard and helped himself.

"Well,—don't tell on me," he said puffing at a lighted match. "Smoke leads to good talk. We meet up here every Wednesday after prayer meeting. It's our regular night. All my boys come,—or rather as many of them as can get away are here. I've had fifteen and sixteen sometimes. You must surely come next Wednesday night and meet them. Adrian Lane is almost invariably here. A sweet fellow, isn't he? Divine voice. We have music, several play the piano well,—and I generally read aloud. They think I read pretty well, Sam, and they always want me to read something, so I usually have a poem or a story ready. We read *Innocents Abroad* last winter and everyone enjoyed it immensely. The boys all like ghost stories. Do you like ghost stories? Do you know Bulwer Lytton's 'House and the Brain' or Poe's 'Murders in the Rue Morgue?' Horror stories, take my word for it. But I prefer to read something that's uplifting like Dickens' 'Christmas Carol' or 'The Dog of Flanders.' We try a little Shakespeare once in a while and last March we all went to see Booth and Barrett in 'Othello.' I shall have to take you to the theater this winter and perhaps to the Academy of Music? You've never seen a play? Well, I have a treat in store for me when I take you to your first. . . . After the reading, the boys all come out here for a little feast, and I have a lot of fun in getting it up and arranging it. I don't urge any of my boys to drink, Sam, but if they want a glass of beer they're welcome to it, and if they choose to smoke, I cannot—as a good host—discourage them, can I?" A wink and a cocked eyebrow accompanied this; Sam smiled understandingly.

"I want you to be one of us," Mr. Wright continued. "I want you to feel these rooms are kind of club-rooms for you; you're welcome at any time, but Wednesday night is club meeting night and you must always make a special point of being here."

It was after midnight before Sam was allowed to depart.

He tried several times to say good night but his host checked him. The subject of work was not mentioned until almost the very last.

"Of course, o' course,—I'm very forgetful, Sam,—you're interested quite naturally to know about what's going to occupy you. I wish there was an opportunity for you to be associated with me. Fortunately,—or unfortunately, as you care to view it,—I am not wholly dependent on my business activities which are not very important. I've a little office in the James Building,—that's on Fifth Avenue,—I'll give you the address. A little agency that's all, that's all, Sam. Paint, pen-knives, and pool-tables; that's my line. Strange combination, isn't it, for a Sunday-school teacher? It keeps me occupied, that's the main thing, and I need an outside interest. My staff's very small: only a girl and an office boy. You require a larger field, a place where you can branch out,—a position worthy of that splendid vitality of yours. I have a business acquaintance down on Canal Street,—hardware. How does hardware strike you, Sam? Sometimes I sell Mr. Hartshone a gross of pen-knives. We're very friendly; he's a good man, I know him. I thought of him in connection with you. He's had one of my boys with him, but the poor fellow met with an accident,—street-car smash,—broke both his legs! Hartshone wrote me a letter about him and I went to see him the other day, but . . ." Mr. Wright shook his head significantly. "The vacancy's there and while you won't be able to step into the other lad's shoes, I daresay Hartshone can use you. At any rate, I thought I'd see him about you."

"You're awful kind, Mr. Wright. Thanks tremendously."

"Not at all, not at all, Sam. That's my real business,—helping young men find themselves,—not paint, pen-knives, and pool-tables. I try to do God's work in my own way. 'Suffer little children,' our Lord said, and I amend that in my own case to 'suffer young men,' for I firmly believe, Sam, that of them is the kingdom of heaven as much as of little children.

"Come to my office to-morrow afternoon," Mr. Wright continued, "or better still come and take luncheon with me. I'll see Hartshone in the morning and have a report for you by noon; then, if I'm successful, you can go right down and have a talk with him. Luncheon then,—at the Everett house at one, hey?"

He accompanied Sam to the door, his hand on the boy's shoulder, parting from him with a clap on the back, and a wave downstairs.

Sam reached the empty street and turned his steps homeward. He was pleased with himself, charmed by the big city, elated at the prospect of work which had the appearance of being easily secured. The hardware business or any other, it made no difference to him so long as he might earn his living.

His footsteps echoed along the deserted streets; now and then the distant lamps of a cab appeared, the horse's hoofs sounding like drum beats on the asphalt. He had been in New York a little more than forty-eight hours and already he was growing accustomed to the new environment, beginning to love it. He smiled, remembering his apprehension on the night of his arrival. He sensed the readjustment of ideas that was going on within him; already he had discarded the old standards of Mendon and was accepting the new ones of the city. Mr. Wright's talk of the opportunities that yet lay within the grasp of young men who had only an ordinary amount of brains, but a capacity for self-denial and hard work, fired him. He'd deny himself all right, and devote every hour and every day to work for the next twenty years if at the end of that time he might consider himself a success. Success and wealth! To have a fine home and a carriage and servants and to be a man of importance in this great, throbbing, vital city! Ah, that would satisfy him! As he strode upon his way, his brain aflame with ambition, he fisted his hands upon that great resolve.

CHAPTER VII

§ 1

Mr. Baldwin Wright's expectations for interesting Mr. Hartshone in his new protégé did not meet with disappointment.

"He's badly off for help," said Mr. Wright rubbing his palms and fingers together in great good humor as he beamed at Sam across the luncheon table the following day. "It's in his stock-room where he's short-handed. He was very particular to ask about your morals." The smile upon the jovial face was stretched its widest. "I felt justified," he went on genially, "in assuring him that they were irreproachable. We had to bargain a little about your salary; he said 'three,' I 'four.' 'Come, Mr. Hartshone,' I said to him, 'a laborer is worthy of his hire! The boy's got to live, he's just an orphan and hasn't a penny in the world!' . . . I said nothing about your uncle or that you were living with him,—so mum's the word on that. Let him think you have to pay your own way——"

"But I do!" Sam interrupted.

"That may be, that may be, but Hartshone would never consent to pay you four dollars a week if he thought your uncle had money. Let him think you have no relatives and that you're here in the city trying to get a start. That's best."

The luncheon was sumptuous, Sam thought,—a wonderful meal in a wonderful place,—and Mr. Wright, the most generous of hosts. He hurried downtown for his interview with his prospective employer full of confidence and determination.

Canal Street,—a great wide cross artery that spelled noise, dust, and dirt, and throbbed with the very life blood of the city. Huge lumbering drays, roped with bulky, toppling crates, and drawn by powerful horses, heavily fetlocked, rumbled and pounded along its length or else stood backed to the curbing loading or disgorging freight. Rattling express and de-

livery wagons threaded a noisy passage between them. Elevated trains—not yet electrified—puffed, clanged their bells, and roared uptown and down. Smells were everywhere; the smell of straw-packing, of oakum and coffee, the smell of shavings, of sawdust and resin, the smell of grease, of turpentine and paint, the smell of leather, of rubber and smoke; predominating everything was the smell of humanity,—hurrying, crowding, toiling,—the smell of sweat.

HARTSHONE & FABER. The sign leaned out over the congested pavement, its gold lettering faded and begrimed. Packing cases, bound with tin, lay piled in a clumsy pyramid before the entrance and were being pushed and tumbled by two porters armed with bale-hooks. In the two large windows on either side the double doorway were exhibited samples of different sized rope, wire, and pipe, arranged cart-wheel fashion upon display boards and cards, and rows of nails and screws from the smallest to the largest type, bits for augers graded according to diameters, and various tools. There was a dinginess about these arrays, the windows needed washing, the show cards were fly-specked, the street-dust of days, possibly weeks, lay thick upon them.

Beyond the portals blackness reigned—blackness punctuated here and there, as Sam peered within, by wavering gas jets that revealed glassed-in offices and the surfaces of littered desks, ledgers, and the dim forms of men. Inside there was a strong odor of tar paper and hemp, the distant sound of hammered pipe, muffled voices, brisk footsteps, and the occasional whirring clap of a closing glass door.

Sam made a hesitating entrance. One or two coatless men, their shirt-sleeves held back by metal spring arm-bands, hurried past him, papers fluttering in their hands.

"Mr. Hartshone? 's Mr. Hartshone in?"

"Huh? What?"

"Mr. Hartshone?"

A door of a glass-partitioned office directly at Sam's elbow was indicated. The center glass panel bore the inscription: HARTSHONE & FABER,—HARDWARE, WHOLESALE, and down in the corner in small lettering: MR. HARTSHONE. WALK IN. Sam tried the round black china knob and pushed open the door. A white-haired man with a square, white, Ulysses S. Grant beard, sat in his shirt-sleeves behind a piled-up flat desk. The little room was crowded with a battered, iron safe,

letter files, a copy-press, and stacks of catalogues, while above the desk a gas jet flared and sang. With the gentle closing of the door, Mr. Hartshone looked up. Sam's voice deserted him; he shifted from one foot to another and stared into the crown of his derby hat.

"What is it?" Mr. Hartshone spoke crisply.

Swallowing nervously, the boy lamely stated his purpose.

A sound of enlightenment came from the desk; the man studied Sam carefully, looking him over from head to feet. He had a stern, cold, impassive face.

"Find Gregg in the stock-room and tell him to put you to work."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir." Sam turned to go.

"Here,—come back here! . . . Do you smoke?"

"No, sir."

"No smoking on these premises, y'understand that? . . . What's your name? . . . Address? . . ." He wrote them down. "I'll put you on the pay-roll at four dollars a week; if you don't give satisfaction inside a month, you can look for another place." He bent over his desk again without further interest.

Sam groped his way out. In the main office, he stood still a moment, his heart soaring. "Gregg—Gregg—Gregg," he kept repeating; he was fearful he might forget the name.

He passed through a bricked archway. Gas jets flared from hinged brackets along the walls. There was a narrow passage of white-washed brick, an iron door and then a large wareroom of high, white-washed brick sides, dust-covered windows through which daylight filtered uncertainly, and more gas jets. Here were rows and rows of barrels, bins and shelving separated by narrow aisles; neat, green-labeled pasteboard boxes, large and small, were stacked in orderly rows upon the shelves, while the barrels and bins variously contained balls of twine, nails, screws, rivets, bolts, staples, nuts, bolts, and galvanized iron hooks. There was an intermittent banging going on, the clanking reverberation of hammering on long pipe.

Sam found Mr. Gregg in a far corner behind a wooden railing at another gas-lit desk. He seemed a worried, harassed individual, constantly adjusting his spectacles with nervous fingers while he talked. He had small time to waste upon the new employee.

"Dave!" A shambling, lengthy person appeared clad in overalls and jumper. "Here's a new feller. Get him started on that Billings order; Ben's got the invoice somewhere. It's gotter get out to-night. . . . We're busier 'n hell," he said to Sam; "nobody's got any time to show you nothing. You gotter get on to this stock y'rself—an' the quicker you learn it, the better off you'll be. . . . Say, Jerry! *Jer-ry!*" he was bawling for someone else, and Sam followed his shuffling, elongated guide.

"Here, son," said Dave, handing him a blue bill-head, "you tackle this here, and I'll get after the Billings order. That's a bastard. You see what's wanted here? Just plain hinges, so many nickel, so many iron, so many brass. Look here: sixteen strap, one dozen T-hinge, six flap, six blind and six gate, for hook and eye. . . ."

In a few minutes Sam was at work.

§ 2

He went home at the end of the day, thrilling with pride, and happiness. He could live on four dollars a week, and he believed he could save, too. The idea of actually being able to earn so much real money, of being worth that much in dollars and cents to a regular employer in New York City filled him with almost a choking satisfaction. He felt bigger, better, stronger. All his life, practically, he had slaved for no concrete reward, and now determination fired him; come what might, he would not lose this magnificent opportunity.

It was gratifying, too, to announce the news to his uncle and aunt. They were both highly delighted; he had known they would be. Uncle Cyrus observed that Baldwin Wright was most certainly a fine gentleman and a good friend to young men.

"I thought I'd go 'round and see him to-night and let him know how I came out," Sam suggested looking to his uncle for approval.

"And be sure to thank him," Aunt Sarah cautioned.

"Oh, yes; of course."

"He's doing God's work," Cyrus observed. "I earnestly hope, Sam, you won't forget the Almighty in your gratitude."

"Perhaps Mr. Wright will know of a room I can get for a

couple of dollars a week. I'm pretty sure my meals won't cost me more than twenty-five cents a day."

"Don't be in a hurry to leave us, my boy. You're welcome here as long as you'll stay."

There was no one at home when Sam rang Mr. Wright's bell and he was turning away in disappointment when he almost collided with that gentleman at the foot of the steps.

"Well, well, my boy, this is indeed a pleasure! I've just had a little snack at a restaurant 'round the corner. . . . So you secured your position, did you? That's splendid, splendid. Old Hartshone's a good fellow, but I imagine he's really shorthanded. Come upstairs and tell me all about it. I was wondering about you over my solitary meal."

He led the way upstairs and once more Sam found himself comfortably established in the easy-chair before the open window listening to his new friend's mellifluous voice.

"So you're launched upon your career,—your bark is set for unknown shores! I look at you, Sam, and wonder—wonder what the future has in store for you. You stand upon the very threshold of life, your toe is set upon the mark for the great race. How will you finish? Will you fall by the wayside, will you be a tail-ender, or will you be among the leaders when the race is run? It's self-indulgence, Sam my boy, that digs the pitfalls for young men. Beware of self-indulgence. Ah yes, I know, I know. I've seen so many start bravely in the race and stumble,—sometimes fall headlong in the very get-away. Self-denial, self-discipline, self-control,—learn these things, Sam, and the race is yours. Beware of sinful pleasures, beware of sloth and idleness. Feel that each day you have denied yourself something, given up something you wanted to do. That builds character, my son, that will make you strong as iron. . . ."

The lecture continued uninterruptedly for half an hour. Sam felt everything Mr. Wright said to him was true; he resolved he would try his uttermost to follow such excellent advice. He was hungry for success; he wanted to achieve something worth while; he wanted to get on top. All the world, it seemed to him, was groping upward from the bottom; few fought their way through, few won to the light of security, power, affluence. His father and mother had never done so; they had always been obliged to struggle unsuccessfully beneath too great a load, had always been bound and hampered, crushed down.

It should be different with him! There was nothing to hold him back, nothing to stop him except weakness in himself—and there must be no weakness! He *would* be strong as iron!

Several agencies, Mr. Wright informed him, furnished lists of lodgings, and he promised to make inquiries, since Sam's time was limited, and let him have the names and addresses of four or five good places.

"Don't forget club-meeting night after prayer meeting on Wednesday," he reminded his guest upon his departure. "Be sure to be here and meet some of my boys. They're going to like you, Sam, and you're going to like them. I feel certain of it."

§ 3

But the question of where he should live was satisfactorily settled the following evening. His aunt brought the subject up at the end of dinner.

"Ruth, my dear, I wish you'd run upstairs, and find my spectacles for me; they're there or thereabouts; I'll be up directly." Aunt Sarah watched the girl out of the room and waited a moment until she was beyond earshot, then turned to her nephew.

"I was talking to your uncle about your leaving us, Samuel," she said, "and he is as *loath* to see you go as I am. I have no doubt you could get a furnished room for two dollars a week, but I don't think it is a good idea for you to be taking your meals at cheap restaurants. Besides that, he thinks as I do, that you are too *young* yet to live by yourself in this big city. All sorts of things happen to young men here. You've started out to live a good Christian life, and you've expressed a desire to join the church. It would be a *pity* if outside influences undid the work so well begun. I feel—your Uncle Cyrus and I, both, feel—a responsibility for you, and we think it would be wiser for you to stay here with us. We have that extra room upstairs and I could board you without financial loss for three dollars a week. I have no doubt if you're industrious and live a good clean life you'll soon be raised, and then you'll have something more for clothes and extras,—but I couldn't undertake to give you your meals *and* your room here for *less* than three dollars a week."

Sam was delighted.

"Very well, then," his aunt said crossing her bony wrists upon her lap. "I spoke to Marty and she has no objection to giving you your breakfast at seven, and putting up a nice, wholesome cold lunch for you in a paper bag."

"Oh, she needn't bother about the lunch," Sam hastened to say. "There's a free-lunch counter right near our place. Dave—he's the man in the stock-room where I work—took me there to-day. You can get quite a good lunch for a dime."

"A saloon?" his uncle, who had been a silent listener up to this moment, now asked sharply. He read his answer in his nephew's conscious face.

"Oh, Sam—Sam! Beware of saloons! You oughtn't to trust yourself in one. They're dens of evil—wicked places designed by the devil for the undoing of young men. I don't want a nephew of mine to be a frequenter of saloons. Keep away from them. They'll soon undermine your moral strength——"

"But I don't drink anything, Uncle; just a glass of milk, that's all."

"Very well for now, perhaps, but it will soon be beer and then whiskey. I don't want you to countenance such places. Avoid the appearance of evil. Show your fellow-workers by your example that you do not approve of saloons."

"It's just these wicked places and the loose companions you find in them," put in Aunt Sarah, "that your uncle and I *dread* for you, Samuel. We want to guard you against such associations and that's one of the main reasons why we want you to remain here with us and have the daily influence of a *good Christian home* to offset these contaminating influences."

"I'd like to stay here very much," Sam said simply.

"Well, that's settled then. I'm sure we're as well pleased as you are."

§ 4

Sam liked his work at the hardware store. It was cool in the big brick stock-room during the hot days. The nuts, bolts, and metal fittings in the different barrels and bins fascinated him. He liked to touch and handle them, letting them drop through his fingers; while the bright shining tools, wrapped in brown paper and tucked away in the pasteboard boxes along the shelves, he considered truly beautiful. There was some-

thing extremely clean and chaste about the white steel of their blades, the smoothness of their metal parts, and the neatness of their manufacture. He had no idea there were so many different kinds of tools, and there were a thousand and one other things besides tools that Hartshone & Faber carried, such as chains, locks, pulleys, window fasteners, swivels, mouse-traps, dinner bells, compasses, hooks, and door bolts. Then there was the rope, wire, hose, and pipe, each in a dozen different sizes, weights, thicknesses, and structures. A healthy young Irishman named Jerry Haines had these in charge with a boy to help him. The bins and shelves were under the supervision of Dave whom Sam assisted. Over both these departments presided Mr. Gregg, aided by an individual known as Ben, a kind of general factotum, who ran his errands, kept a record of the orders and checked out shipments.

Ben was a few years older than Sam,—a talkative person, ready to contradict and give orders in a dictatorial offensive manner. He was a great practical joker and found much diversion at the expense of the new employee. Dave was a slipshod, long-necked, dangling-armed young man who shuffled about his work, was lazy, indifferent, and foul of speech. Sam in all his life had never heard such obscenities as passed glibly off Dave's lips. He could not avoid betraying his distaste. There was a foul humor in the man's indecencies and Sam had either to laugh at them or assume an affronted righteousness. He chose to laugh and maintain a friendly relationship, but he was unable to hide his real feeling altogether, and once his embarrassment was detected, the foulest and coarsest jests were recounted for his discomfiture. Dave and Ben vied with each other in this inventiveness, roaring at their own unspeakable filthiness.

None of the other men brought their lunches with them At twelve o'clock they dropped their work and streamed out of the Walker Street entrance to a saloon known as Ricketts' Bar where they drank one or more glasses of beer and fed hugely on beef-stew and frankfurters. Mr. Gregg frequented a more decorous eating-place, but Ricketts' Bar was crowded with workmen, greasy-handed, greasy-dressed, smelling of sweat and machine-oil, from eleven o'clock until two each day. Sam preferred his cold lunch and the solitude of the big stock-room at the noon hour.

To succeed in his work, to have Dave and Mr. Gregg

think well of him and consider him a handy man to have about the place, this was his immediate goal. He could put up with the dirty talk, Ben's overbearing manner and annoying jests, he could hold his temper and bide his time. He took Hartshone & Faber's catalogues home with him and pored over their pages until far into the night in order to familiarize himself with the stock.

§ 5

Wednesday night was prayer meeting, and after the short service, Sam, Adrian Lane, and Mr. Wright met in the church lobby and walked to the man's rooms in Stuyvesant Square. The boys' friend was in his most expansive mood.

"Well—well, here we are," he said, slipping a hand through the arms of each. "Club-meeting night! The gathering of the clan! I'm going to make a welsh-rarebit for you to-night, boys, and I have a fine story to read. Jack Cheney's coming up and Taylor Evans and Vin Morrisey and perhaps Arnold Langdon——"

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Adrian Lane; "what did you want to ask Langdon for! He'll spoil everything and want to argue about religion! We shan't have any music."

"Perhaps he won't come," Mr. Wright said, immediately apologetic. "He may not have received my message. . . . He's a nice person, Adrian, I don't see what you have against him. . . ."

"I'm not interested in theology and that's all he wants to talk about. . . ."

They fell to discussing Langdon heatedly. Sam wondered at Adrian Lane's tone with Mr. Wright; he spoke to him too familiarly, calling him "Baldwin" and sometimes even "Baldy." A strange, high-strung youth, he impressed Sam—opinionated, spoiled, bent upon having his own way. Mr. Wright's toleration of his pertness was hard to understand.

As they approached the house, a dark figure rose from the steps. At once there was a hearty exchange of greetings.

"Well, Jack, this is splendid of you. How's the 'Doctor'? I'm so glad you were able to come around. . . ."

"Guess I'm early. I wasn't sure whether you were going to be home to-night when no one answered the bell. . . ."

"Always Wednesday night. You know Adrian, and here is a new friend of mine: this is Sam Smith,—Jack Cheney."

There was a warm, firm handclasp. The young men trooped up the stairs.

In the light Sam looked with interest at Cheney; he had liked the grip of his hand. The youth had a lean face, a sandy complexion, and noticeably wide jaw-bones. When he talked, the articulation of the joint beside the ear was clearly discernible. There was a straightforward, clean-cut quality about him, and Sam felt at once he wanted to be friends with him. Cheney was his elder by a year of two,—and had the college stamp about him. His straw hat, his thin gray clothes, his shirt, cravat,—everything he wore,—were correct, and Sam needed no one to tell him they were good. He found himself admiring the new acquaintance enormously.

Adrian at once sat down to the piano, and began to play a few chords, gently humming; Mr. Wright disappeared to don his velvet smoking jacket. Left alone with Cheney, Sam was anxious to make a pleasant impression, but his diffidence held him speechless. It was Cheney who began the friendly overtures, picking out a cigar-case from his pocket and offering it first before selecting one of the weeds himself.

His questions from anyone else, Sam might have resented, but to this agreeable person he was eager to reply. With a rush of confidence he told about Mendon and the farm, his parents' death, his uncle, the church, and his recent friendship with Mr. Wright. Cheney listened with a pleased and interested smile, his head cocked on one side to avoid his cigar's smoke.

"He's quite a character," Cheney said presently, referring to their host. "I used to belong to his Bible Class years ago before I went away to boarding school, and afterwards for a couple of years at Princeton. Mr. Wright's always been very decent to me. He's often staked me when I was in college and came up to New York for a good time."

A sharp ring sounded and Mr. Wright poked his head out through the curtains of the dining-room.

"Pull that lever in the hall, will you, Adrian, and let them in? It's probably Vin and Taylor Evans."

But it was an older man who came in. "Paul Hilderbrand," Adrian, who greeted him warmly, called him. He was the organist of a fashionable church uptown, Cheney told Sam.

"I hoped I'd find you here," said the new arrival to Adrian. "I want you to sing for me next Sunday, if you will. Our tenor's on his vacation and his substitute's got a cold. Do you think you could do the Handel aria?"

"If you'll rehearse me, I'd love it," Adrian said eagerly.

The aria as against some other song was debated. Mr. Wright came in to greet his new guest and in the midst of his welcome, Vin Morrisey and Taylor Evans arrived. The latter was a tall, stoop-shouldered young man with light curly hair, a curious sleepy eye, and a deep drawling bass voice. He conducted a small bookstore, Cheney confided to Sam, over on Third Avenue. Vin Morrisey was a romantic type with an abundance of dark wavy hair and deep-set eyes. He had been an actor, Sam was informed, and was also something of an artist, a poet, and a photographer. He had played one or two minor rôles in road shows, he painted water-colors, wrote philosophical sonnets in the Wordsworth manner, took photographs of birds in their natural habitat, and had tramped all over the country, walking railroad ties, begging his way, doing it, Mr. Wright informed Sam, when several evenings later they discussed him, not from necessity, but because he liked it. He was a lover of nature in all its forms, and periodically disappeared into the hills with little more than a blanket and his camera.

Everyone knew everybody else, and Sam was introduced in Mr. Wright's hearty, but annoying personal manner.

"Our new member of the Wednesday night club, boys,—Sam Smith late of Mendon, Mass. He's going to be one of us and do us all a lot of good. Sam comes from the farm; he's no city-bred boy! Show 'em your muscles, Sam."

The new member retired precipitately into a corner. He could not understand why Mr. Wright had to make him conspicuous, and embarrass him.

The company settled itself about the room, some in chairs, others on the floor. Almost everyone lighted a cigar or a pipe and presently the smoke appeared in the lamp-light in trailing blue scarves.

"Well, come on; what are you going to give us?" There was a general call for the reading.

Mr. Wright settled himself in his big easy chair. Its back was against the curve of the piano, and the lamp, set upon the instrument behind him, shed its radiance above his head.

A book was in his hand, but he made no motion to open it. He glanced slowly, affectionately, about the room, including the company in a satisfied, genial smile.

"Well, boys," he said looking from face to face, "here we are. These are the moments I live for. I ask no better reward from Almighty God than just having you here waiting for me to begin to read to you."

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence and then the speaker opened his book.

A story followed about a man, "John Oakhurst," and a woman called "The Duchess" and two young people nicknamed "The Innocent" and "Piney." It held Sam spellbound. At the end he was too deeply stirred to join the applause. The room was hot, close, and thick with smoke. He rose to his feet and went to the open window where he sat on the sill and looked out across the Square at the lights and black battlemented outline of the city.

Adrian began to sing: "Loch Lomond" and "Annie Laurie" rendered with exquisite feeling. The prick of tears stung Sam's eyeballs.

"I wish you'd sing 'Though Your Sins Be as Scarlet,'" Mr. Wright begged and at once Paul Hilderbrand fitted his fingers into the opening chords.

"Oh, hymns—hymns—hymns!" Adrian cried pettishly; "I'm sick of hymns! You're always asking for some silly old hymn, Baldwin."

"Go on, Adrian,—if Mr. Wright wants you to."

But the young man resolutely refused.

"I'm not in very good voice to-night, anyhow," he asserted.

There was a general appeal to Vin Morrisey after this. He lay stretched out on the floor, a pipe in his mouth that sucked and sputtered with his breath, his hands locked beneath his head. He declared he had nothing to offer.

"Give 'em that 'In a Zenana' thing," drawled Taylor Evans.

There was an encouraging silence. Without moving his position, Morrisey picked the pipe from his mouth, and began:

> I peer through my casement window,
> I eat not, neither rejoice,
> My lord hath gone to the mountains,
> I wait for my lover's voice.

It was a poem of passion, desire, rebellion, rather shockingly frank in some of its phraseology. Sam threw a conscious

look at his host's face, but he detected nothing there. Even his untrained ear caught something of mysterious India in Morrisey's words—bazaars, minarets, and caravans, turbaned rajahs glittering with jewels, marble palaces, an imprisoned woman trapped in luxury, surfeited with comforts, hungering for the vitality of the desert, and love.

Jack Cheney applauded vigorously and Paul Hilderbrand quoted: "The sea hath bonds but deep desire hath none."

Sadness settled upon Sam. He felt hopelessly ignorant among all these brilliant fellows. He had nothing to offer them in return, not even intelligent appreciation. In his heart he had always had a secret contempt, not for education exactly, but for what he had thought of as erudition, but now he came face to face with the thing he had despised. His understanding and appreciation of literature, poetry, and music were upon the level of Dave's, Ben's, and Jerry's down at the wareroom! That was where he belonged, listening to their filthy, obscene stories,—not here among these favored youths who spoke a language alien to his ears.

Mr. Wright announced that in five minutes the rarebit would be ready. Most of the company flocked out to watch the cheese prepared, but Adrian Lane and Hilderbrand lingered at the piano where they hummed arias and fingered notes. Sam looked for the "rabbit" he supposed of course was to be stewed in the chafing-dish, but he did not betray himself, even when Mr. Wright called loudly for the hot plates from the gas oven in the kitchen, and began to serve the viscous mess he had been conscientiously stirring. The dish was pronounced a huge success; enthusiasm ran round the table.

"Never made a better rarebit in your life, Mr. Wright."

"Lord! It *is* good!"

"Perfect, Baldwin."

"Personally, I have only one criticism——"

"Yes, yes,—we all know what that is. . . . You outdid yourself, to-night, Mr. Wright."

"Well, boys, you delight me. I'm glad it's good; I confess I think so myself. It all depends upon the cheese, you know. Do you like it, Sam? Ever had a welsh rarebit before? Well, don't let it get cold. . . . Pass the beer, Adrian; fill Paul's glass. Where's yours, Vin? Come on, now, *skold!*"

The company drank, they finished the rarebit, plates were

pushed aside, pipes and cigars came out, chairs were tilted against the wall, the talk recommenced.

Sam listened, exerting himself to understand what was said, feeling miserably lost and out of this happy conviviality when some quick, interjected comment drew a general laugh. He leaned his elbows upon the table, his chin in his palms, turning his eyes to each speaker's face. To him this group spelled paradise,—a paradise to which he could never hope to attain. He longed to achieve the address of Cheney, the intelligence of Taylor Evans, the wit of Vin Morrisey, and even the confidence of Adrian Lane. Mr. Wright and Paul Hilderbrand were older,—they did not so much matter,—but the others were all approximately his own age, and they seemed immeasurably above and beyond him, moving in a world of thought and accomplishment he had never imagined existed. It was not so much the hunger for knowledge that stirred him as the wish to feel himself part of their intercourse, to meet them on an equal footing. Within him ambition asserted itself again, as it had on that other night when he had been roused to think of wealth and success. These he might some day win—if dogged persistence and hard work alone mattered,—but here was something, his inner consciousness told him, infinitely more difficult to attain.

§ 6

The party did not break up until long after one o'clock. Hilderbrand left at an early midnight, but none of the others showed any disposition to follow his example. Mr. Wright and Vin Morrisey fell to talking of old plays,—"The Lady of Lyons," "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," and many of the round, mouth-filling lines rose to their lips. Sam had already suspected that Mr. Wright had once been on the stage, and this was confirmed later by Jack Cheney as they walked away together, after it had been reluctantly agreed that the delightful evening could not be further prolonged. Vin Morrisey and Taylor Evans said good night, shook hands, and turned eastward together; Adrian Lane remained for the night with Mr. Wright; Sam discovered to his pleasure that Cheney's direction was his own.

"Oh, yes,—Mr. Wright was an actor for years, played juve-

nile parts with Boucicault, and was very good, I'm told," Cheney informed him as they set out together. "Morrisey's a queer one, isn't he? His code of life is his own; he doesn't care a fig for conventions. Taylor Evans, I believe, has more genuine ability. You wouldn't think so from his slow, drawling, indolent manner, would you? He buries himself in that bookshop of his and reads everything that comes in or goes out of it. You ought to go round and see him some day. His little place is quite interesting and he, himself, especially so."

"I'd like to. . . . Do you ever have any spare time in the evenings?"

"Well, Medical College keeps me pretty busy. There's a seven o'clock clinic and classes all day. In the evenings we're supposed to grind."

"When do you finish?"

"In another two years. Then I want to go to Germany for a while, but I shall have to find the money first."

"Do you go to Mr. Wright's on Wednesday nights often?"

"Well, not as I used to. Sometimes there's an odd group there and it isn't much fun. To-night I thought it damned interesting."

"Oh, it was wonderful!" Sam said with feeling. "I've never had a friend or ever had a chance to go 'round with fellows my own age. I didn't have any time at Mendon. And to-night—well, it was great! I can't talk the way you all do and I don't understand half you say, but it's just a—a privilege," he hazarded, "to sit and listen to you."

Cheney laughed.

"I don't think it is such a rarefied atmosphere but what you'll soon be part of it. It seemed strange to you to-night—that's all."

"But you see," persisted Sam, "I've never had anybody to go about with,—chums, would you call them? There wasn't a soul near Mendon with whom I cared to associate even if I had had the time. . . . Gee, I'd like to have one friend!"

He said it almost passionately. Cheney broke into another amused laugh.

"Well,—can't I qualify?"

Sam's heart leaped into his throat. He looked at his companion and saw that he meant what he said.

"Would—*would* you?" he stammered.

Cheney held out his hand and Sam grasped it. At once he was ashamed of the feeling he had shown.

"Good night," he said almost brusquely, "I must go back now; I've passed my corner."

"Well, good night," echoed Cheney.

Sam started away but checked himself and turned round.

"See you next Wednesday?"

"Sure, I'll try to be there."

Sam hurried homeward, his heart filled to suffocation with a bursting sensation he did not understand. Jack Cheney—Jack Cheney—Jack Cheney! The world meant nothing else to him. He believed he had met a paragon, a god, and every fiber of his being reached out towards this new friend. He remembered it was to his ear alone that Cheney's confidences during the evening had been directed, and he tried to recall his every word. He pictured his smile, his sandy complexion, the funny way his jaw moved just in front of his ear; he thought of his smart grooming, his clothes, and most poignantly of all that warm hand-clasp which meant honesty and friendliness.

He reached his room, flung off his clothes, extinguished the Welsbach burner, and groped his way blindly but happily to bed, dropping into it with a weary sigh.

Cheney—Cheney—Jack Cheney!

CHAPTER VIII

§ 1

Sam rose in the mornings at six-thirty, breakfasted at seven, and with his cold lunch and stoppered-bottle of mixed coffee packed into an old battered alligator-skin hand-bag Aunt Sarah lent him, walked to Hartshone & Faber's which he reached a few minutes before eight. His coat and vest he hung in the wash-room, pulled a jumper over his head and a pair of grease-stained overalls, once Dave's, over his trousers. The work never lacked interest. It was straight-ahead, mechanical employment, and as he became familiar with the stock, he grew more and more to enjoy handling the tools and the contents of bins and barrels. Dave cursed wantonly, poured forth obscenities and foul stories at which Sam awkwardly laughed and often colored, but an amiable co-operation grew up between them. Ben alone remained a thorn in Sam's side. He hated this dirty-mouthed, foul-tongued, practical joker and longed for an opportunity to pick a quarrel with him. The thought of a fight with him made his hands itch, but he feared Dave's influence with Mr. Gregg who distinctly showed his assistant favor.

At the noon hour Sam had the warehouse practically to himself. Patsy, a decrepit old Irish janitor who cleaned up rubbish, sometimes wandered in and out, but for the most part he was alone at this time, and enjoyed the solitude as he ate his lunch, drank his cold coffee, and read his novel, for Mr. Wright had recommended and lent him books. The men trickled back slowly, and at one o'clock the segregation of stock and the filling of orders were resumed. On some days there was a great flood of these, and always when this happened, it seemed that every order which came from the front office was marked "Special" and had to be gotten out that same night. Sam enjoyed it thoroughly when they were rushed. There was a thrill in running to and fro, jumping from

bin to shelf, grabbing the right boxes from the right places, counting out the rougher stock from the receptacles below,—but Dave grumbled, swore, and vowed he was going to quit. Sam rather liked Jerry Haines and cherished the hope that some time before long, he would be transferred to the pipe department, and be under the direction of this agreeable, cheerful Irishman.

One day toward the end of the noon hour, the men came sauntering back from their beer and frankfurters at Ricketts' Bar; it still lacked a few minutes before it was time to resume work. Ben and Dave strolled into the warehouse, both of them with tail-ends of cigarettes in their fingers. They stopped to speak to Sam a minute, regaling him with one of their foul inventions, and as the three stood in a group, Sam was conscious that some one approached from behind. He presumed it was Patsy, but suddenly Ben ceased speaking, a startled look came into his face, and he let fall the smoking cigarette butt from his fingers, covering it with a quick motion of his foot. Sam turned; Mr. Hartshorne was standing within a yard of him. He had never seen the head of the house in the stock-room before. He froze as his eyes met the grim set face with its short square white beard.

"You smoking?" Mr. Hartshorne asked in his crisp manner, pointing at Sam.

"No, sir."

The employer surveyed the trio slowly, deliberately. Dave's stump still between his fingers convicted him upon the spot. Hartshorne's roving eye discovered the flattened, still-smoking cigarette butt upon the ground.

"That yours?" Mr. Hartshorne demanded, addressing Ben.

"No, sir."

"Yours?" His eyes switched to Sam.

"No, sir."

The gaze shifted from one to the other with a calm and deadly inspection.

"Which of you is lying?"

There was no answer. Sam, staring at the floor, his face red, was certain he looked guilty.

"Come, I'll give you one more chance," Mr. Hartshorne continued; "which of you was smoking?"

Silence.

"Gregg!" Addressing the warehouse superintendent and

pointing to Dave, he went on: "This man's fired; have him draw his pay at once and clear off the premises. One of these two others was also smoking; find out which one and dismiss him; if they won't own up, fire them both. You understand, don't you, Gregg, that we can't have smoking here? The insurance company won't permit it."

"Yes, sir, I understand that all right."

"Very well, then."

Mr. Hartshorne turned on his heel. All eyes followed him in stony silence until he had quitted the stock-room. Then Mr. Gregg swore violently.

"God,—that's going to put me in a fine fix!"

He turned savagely upon Ben and Sam. "Which of you was smokin'?"

Ben burst out immediately into assertions of innocence, but Dave cut him short.

"Aw—hell, what d'you want to lie for! You know damn well that's yours!" he said, kicking the butt.

"You dirty, damned squealer!" Ben wheeled on him menacingly, his hands fisted.

Sam was hardly conscious of what he did. As Ben lunged, he thrust himself forward, catching the blow upon his shoulder. Instinctively he realized his long-awaited opportunity had come and he thirsted for battle. Ben swung round to meet him, glowering. There was a feint, a duck, and Sam drove his fist straight at his adversary and felt the hard impact of his knuckles against the other's face. There was no need for a second blow. They picked Ben up, carried him to the work bench, and began sousing him with water. Sam disappeared unobtrusively and returned to his work. He felt he had no place among those helping Ben back to consciousness although he was ready to show a decent amount of sympathy. By this time, many of the other workmen had collected around his prostrate foe, and he feared they might fancy he wanted to parade himself. A babble of voices and explanations of what had occurred reached him. He stopped his work to listen now and then, hoping to hear a reassuring word that Ben was upon his feet again. His heart stood still when he caught the sound of approaching footsteps; he was certain it was either Mr. Gregg or Mr. Hartshone to tell him to draw his pay and clear out, but it was only Jerry Haines, grinning and holding out his hand.

"You got some punch,—ain't you, boy? Say, you knocked that bum out for about twelve minutes! They rang an ambulance for him."

"He isn't hurt bad, is he?" Sam asked, nervously.

"Naw—h! He's all right. He's up now, but I guess he'll be rubbing that jaw of his for a couple of weeks. He don't know yet what struck him. Some one in the crowd yelled: 'Whoa, there Maud!' just as he come to, and I'll be hanged if he didn't look 'round scared like." Jerry laughed in delight. "He's a mean cuss, and I'm glad you fixed him. I been crazy to do it myself ever since he came here. . . . Well, I just come over to say 'How d'y' and to shake your fist."

"Much obliged," Sam said, coloring. "I didn't want Dave —he was telling the truth—it was my affair, I thought——"

"Yes, I know. He wagged his jaw just once too often, but it'll be some time 'fore he wags it again. I guess there won't be any more jokes played on you. . . . I never seen anyone knocked out worse than that bum. You certainly got some punch!"

Haines grinned at him again and departed. Sam turned back to his work, but he began to notice that the knuckles and back of his right hand hurt him and it was weeks before the pain disappeared.

For a time he had to do his own work, and Dave's and Ben's as well. Mr. Gregg was savage with him; Ben had been a favorite and the superintendent had shared his assistant's antipathy for the new employee. Now he felt Sam to be responsible for Ben's going and the general demoralization of the work consequent upon short-handedness. He growled constantly and found fault with Sam both for real mistakes, and imaginary ones. He worried over trifles and grew daily more irritable. The weeks, for the next month or so, were hard ones, then Gregg fell ill,—Sam heard it was nervous indigestion,—and chaos reigned. Jerry Haines was finally put in the former superintendent's place, and a young boy named Farley was engaged to help Sam with the orders. Gregg never came back.

§ 2

In September, Dr. McIntosh returned from his vacation, and at an evening service early in the month, Sam joined the

church. It was a painful experience. Others that stood up with him and assembled before the pulpit were young boys and girls, a dozen of them, hardly more than children. Sam felt he towered about them and that every eye in the church was centered upon him alone. However, his uncle and aunt were highly delighted and he was glad to have pleased them.

Doctor Andrew McIntosh had a remarkable and delightful personality. He had leonine silvery hair, thick and abundant, that swept off his broad and slightly bulging forehead and almost touched his shoulders. His eyes, under bushy gray eyebrows, were startling in their penetration and he had a large aquiline nose, a wide, square chin. His mouth was enormous, drooping at the corners, while his under lip protruded slightly beyond the upper one. His voice,—the most extraordinary thing about him,—could roar out over his congregation and drop in an instant to a whisper that could be heard in the farthest parts of the church. On one occasion when Sam was unavoidably late for an evening service, he had heard Dr. McIntosh's booming accents while yet two squares away. It was an astonishing vocal organ, and the preacher had perfect control over it. It was interesting to watch him work himself up while delivering a sermon. Invariably, he began in the quietest of strains, soothing, ingratiating, almost purring. Then would come the opening pistol shot accompanied by the first gesture. In a moment or two he would be leaning heavily across the pulpit, his hands clasped far out in front of him, reasoning in persuasive tones, and in a little while the full swing of his delivery would come to him. He would pour forth a torrent of words, invectives, denunciations, fulminations,—whispering some, shouting others, pounding the pulpit, shaking his silvery mane, bowing his venerable head until his forehead almost touched his locked fingers, suddenly flinging out a challenge and walking up and down from one corner of the platform to the other, gesticulating, haranguing, abruptly interrupting his tirade to return to his reading desk and sink his words to an effective whisper. He made great use of the pronoun, "I"; "I believe this . . . ," "with God's help I propose to do . . . ," "you and I, my brethren . . . ," "in my forty-one years of pastorship, I have told my people . . ." His messages were all personal,—special appeals from himself to his audience. Sam considered him wonderful. Sometimes he felt stirred to what he thought the depths of his being, and

then the Doctor would set forth an additional body blow and he would experience an actual physical sensation. His skin would tingle, his heart plunge to a quicker beat, he would find himself sitting tense, his muscles strained, his hands gripped tightly.

One sermon in particular made a lasting impression upon him. Doctor McIntosh preached it in an effort to bring home to his congregation the duty of giving financial support to the church. The campaign toward raising funds for the parish debt was in full swing, but the money so far had not been coming in as rapidly as the pastor expected. In the midst of his exhortation, Doctor McIntosh produced a cookie from an inside pocket of his coat and held it up before the congregation between thumb and finger. That, said he, represented a man's wealth; all he wanted was a hundredth part of it,—*just one hundredth part*. The rest of it might be spent for rent and clothes, food and pleasure. Ninety-nine hundredths of it might all go for these things,—but just that tiny one-hundredth part he asked of each and every man and woman to give to God. With these words, he brought his palms together in a tremendous smash and broke the cookie into countless fragments; then selecting a pinch of crumbs that remained in his hand, he held them up. That, he told them, was the hundredth part, that was what he expected every person within the sound of his voice to give to the glory of God and the maintenance of His church.

Sam parted with the dollar that was all he had out of his week's salary after paying for his board and lodging. His uncle told the family at dinner, that the collection had amounted to over three thousand dollars, many people dropping I. O. U.'s in the plate. It was a telling tribute to the power of the preacher's eloquence.

The Sunday-school was also active in collecting money. Each class was given a china pig with a slot in its back and every scholar was urged to bring something for "the pig" each Sunday in addition to the regular contribution. On a certain date the pigs were all to be broken, the money counted and the class having the richest pig, in proportion to its size, was to be awarded a silk and tasseled banner which was to stand beside its table for a whole year thus designating it as the honor class of the entire school. Entertainments were arranged to which admission was charged and a Church Fair was held

in the Sunday-school Parlors at which cake, lemonade, and candy were sold, as well as needle-work, burnt-leather cushion covers, paper lamp shades, painted china, calendars, sachet envelopes, lavender sticks, and a thousand-and-one other home-manufactured articles. To Elder Smith and his family was assigned the making of the "grab-bag," the contents of which were to be sold at ten cents a grab. Sam was rather surprised at what went into the parcels and packages, that he and Ruth and his aunt wrapped and tied up in the evenings while preparations were in progress. A weird array of small articles had been contributed: a rusty pen-knife, a cracked picture-frame, an old purse, a vest-pocket note-book from which pages had been torn, a scent bottle, a box of black-headed pins, a worn card-case, a tarnished artificial rose. He thought things of more intrinsic worth should be put into the little packages they were making. Hardly an article in the heterogeneous lot had half the value of the dime. He said something about this to his aunt.

"Oh, well," she explained, "people won't care. They know it's all for the church and they don't expect much."

§ 3

It was in connection with this drive to lift the church debt that Baldwin Wright suggested that two one-act plays be given by members of the Sunday-school in the Parlors, to which the public should be urged to come and a dollar admission charged. This proposition was gravely debated by the Elders. It was a question whether Dr. McIntosh's church could afford thus openly to countenance the theater, but since Elder Wright's proposal seemed to arouse considerable enthusiasm among the congregation, and since the entertainment promised to be lucrative, the hesitant members of the governing board were won over, and the performance decided upon.

The one-act plays Mr. Wright proposed to give were "Who's Who" and "Box and Cox." The latter had only two characters in it and he planned to have Adrian Lane, who had a natural talent for acting, appear as one of them and Vin Morrisey as the other. Morrisey good-naturedly agreed. Adrian was also cast for "Who's Who," which called for five speaking parts.

He was to play the butler who is mistaken for the lord; Sam, the lord, who is mistaken for the butler; Ruth the daughter; Miss Featheringale, a young girl in Elder Smith's class, the maid; and Mr. Wright himself undertook the rôle of the deluded father. Sam had no confidence in himself as an actor and protested against being included. He was certain he would be a laughing-stock before the entire Sunday-school, but his uncle, Ruth, Mr. Wright, everyone, urged him to consent. There was no one else, it appeared, who could give the time. He agreed with grave misgivings and the rehearsals immediately became ordeals of misery for him. He felt himself to be more awkward and bungling than was actually the case. When Mr. Wright would stop to criticize or suggest improvement, he suffered an humiliation no one suspected. Adrian tittered on more than one occasion, and there were many frank laughs at his mistakes. But Mr. Wright seemed to possess an inexhaustible patience. Line by line he would coach Sam's diction and rehearse him again and again in the action.

There came an evening when there was an ill-concealed despair in everyone's face. Sam had made a certain exit speech a dozen times, and still could not get it to the director's satisfaction. The rest of the cast was sitting about wearily, waiting for him to do the business correctly, and there were several spectators in the Sunday-school Parlors, watching. Sam, after a while became dazed, he was physically tired, and Mr. Wright's words no longer carried any meaning. A mental numbness came upon him, mechanically he said his lines and made the exit, each time doing it in precisely the same way. Mr. Wright suddenly gave up, flung his hands into the air, and dropped into a chair; Adrian made a grimace, shrugged his shoulders, and walked away. Miss Featheringale giggled, the spectators shook their heads. The blood rushed to Sam's face, he shut his teeth and fisted his hands; never had he felt so hopelessly a fool.

It was Ruth who suddenly blazed out. She walked to the edge of the platform and spoke heatedly to Mr. Wright.

"I just want to say, I think it's a shame the way you're treating my—my—the way you're treating Sam. He didn't want to play this part; he begged to be let off; he told you he didn't know a thing about acting, and you all insisted and insisted and insisted! Now he does the best he can and you groan and throw your hands in the air, and Adrian makes a

face and walks away. You're all poking fun at him and if I were he, I'd throw the part in your face and walk home!"

The girl's eyes were blazing and she was actually trembling. Little, demure, quiet Ruth! It took them off their feet; they stared at her agape. Sam felt more miserable than ever. He wished Ruth hadn't made such a ridiculous show of herself! He glared at her fiercely, but at this point she began to cry and ran off the stage. Her outburst brought Mr. Wright promptly to his feet.

"Ruth, you're quite right! Sam, I owe you a profuse apology. I'm entirely wrong and I sincerely beg your pardon. What Ruth says is absolutely correct. You're doing the best you can, my boy, and no one is going to ask or expect you to do more. As long as you remember your lines, the play will be a success. Our audience won't be critical, and I appreciate,—we all appreciate, you are doing this as a favor to us and as an indication of your willingness to serve God Almighty. . . . Now we'll go on to the next scene. . . . Come, Adrian."

There was another terrible rehearsal when Jack Cheney and some other fellows,—friends of his,—were present. Mr. Wright had invited them to come to see how the plays were progressing. Conscious of Cheney's presence and the critical estimate of his companions, Sam was anxious to do his best, but no one realized better than he did, himself, how hopelessly he failed. When Mr. Wright repeatedly interrupted the rehearsal and came over to him to begin in a quiet, patient voice to repeat directions with which already he was only too familiar, he wanted the earth to swallow him. Somehow the play was stumbled through, and while Adrian and Vin Morrisey romped through "Box and Cox" in a way that set everyone in the little audience laughing, Sam betook himself to a remote corner of the big room, avoiding Cheney's vicinity. But Jack hunted him out. He sauntered up, with his amused smile, his eyes twinkling, and dropped into a seat at Sam's side.

"Well, my boy," he said easily, slapping him on the knee and turning upon him a cheery, good-natured look, "you certainly were not cut out for the stage."

Sam loved him for speaking the truth.

§ 4

The final performance to his and everyone's surprise and pleasure was an unqualified success. He had never played his part so well, never before had felt himself comfortable in the rôle. He forgot not one of Mr. Wright's warnings and instructions; every word he uttered could be distinctly heard.

The praise showered upon him was as delightful as it was unexpected. No one else seemed to receive half so much, and it was obvious to him and to Ruth, who spoke about it afterwards, that Adrian was frankly annoyed. The Sunday-school Parlors were packed to the doors, the receipts exceeded all estimates, and Dr. McIntosh's remarks after the curtain was finally rung down were happily conceived and happily phrased. He praised the audience, he praised Mr. Wright, he praised the actors, he praised the church. Cheney put the crowning touch to Sam's felicity by elbowing his way through the crowd and gripping his hand. He said nothing; there was no need for words; he told Sam all the latter wanted to hear and know in that heartening clasp. Mr. Wright was full of eulogy and compliments, putting his arm about his shoulders and leading him from group to group.

"What do you folks think of my young Salvini, hey? Didn't he do well? . . . Yes, *sir,* you played your part to-night, Sam, as you never played it before. I'm proud of you; we're all proud of you!"

Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah beamed approval and delight in the congratulations they received for their nephew's and niece's splendid performances. Most of all, Sam thought with satisfaction, little Ruth was happiest.

§ 5

It was a day or two later upon coming home from work that Sam found a letter addressed to him propped on the hall hat-rack. To his surprise and joy he discovered it was from Cheney.

"Dear Samu-el," it read, "if you've nothing better to do Saturday night come round for dinner at six-thirty; my roommate, Matt Madison, is giving a party. Yours, Jack."

Sam was elated. He looked at his shabby Framingham suit and decided he would ask Mr. Wright to help him pick out another. He had spent nothing since he had been in New York and the little money he had had with him upon his arrival was still untouched.

"Most assuredly—most assuredly, my dear boy," Mr. Wright heartily agreed, "nothing would give me greater pleasure."

Together they selected a sober blue suit and his counselor persuaded him to purchase a more becoming hat.

"And Sam, I'm going to make you a little present, if I may, —a present for my young Salvini!" He chose a couple of ties from a counter of the furnishing store and added a pair of gloves. "Here, I want you to have these. A good appearance is an important asset for a young man. Remember that excellent advice Polonius gives Laertes when he is bidding him farewell? 'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy.' Wonderful words, Sam,—wonderful! 'The apparel oft proclaims the man.' "

Cheney lived on Christopher Street in a shabby old brick dwelling, where he and Matt shared a front chamber. The barnlike building was cut up into variously sized small quarters, to house artists, students, and struggling young couples with a child or two. It had uncarpeted wooden floors, and hallways that resounded noisily to footfalls. An odor of cooking pervaded it at all times. The two young men maintained a kind of semi-housekeeping arrangement, made their own breakfasts on a gas burner in a windowless bathroom at the back, sometimes their lunches in the same way and dined at night in neighboring restaurants.

Sam was warmly welcomed. Matt Madison was a similar type to Cheney, only smoother, more dapper. He was very good-looking with dark regular features and coal black glistening hair, but he had none of the masculine ruggedness that had drawn Sam's admiration to his roommate.

"Well, we're all dressed up to-night!" Jack said surveying Sam's attire as he greeted him. "I'll be hanged, Matt, if he doesn't look like a fashion plate! Gloves and everything!"

The room was appallingly untidy, clothes and a litter of books, papers, and tattered medical journals were strewn about. On the table stood a skull, its jaw jointed with wire, and beside it the remnants of a meal,—a chipped coffee cup, an unwashed

plate, scattered crumbs, and on a small side dish the cleaned undercrust of a wedge of pie.

Both Jack and Matt were busy finishing dressing, the latter swearing under his breath as he struggled with a stiff collar before a crazed and crookedly hung mirror. Sam observed he was sorry he was early.

"You aren't a bit early," Jack assured him. "It's we who are late. Here's Louie Ritter, now." Steps sounded in the hall and there came a bump on the door.

"Come in!" Matt shouted. "Ah, the budding attorney," he said greeting him. Sam was introduced.

Ritter was short, pink-faced, with high cheek bones and closely cropped hair; he was a clerk, Sam learned, in a large law firm downtown. Hard upon his heels arrived Vin Morrisey and Taylor Evans.

"Well, here we all are," Jack Cheney declared joyously. "I'll be ready in five seconds."

Presently they flocked out into the bare hall, their feet making a great clatter; Matt locked the door behind him, and they thundered down the stairs to the street.

"Where we going, Jack?"

"Matt's got a table fixed at Galupi's."

They made their way toward Sixth Avenue, walking two and two, Sam paired with Jack Cheney. He was in the gayest of spirits as he strode along. Jack knew so much about the world, and the way things were done. Sam liked and admired all these fellows. It was glorious to be included in such a wonderful group. He longed to show his gratitude; there was nothing, he thought to himself, he would not do, if Jack asked it.

Galupi's was crowded, the tables set close together; the air already was heavy with cigarette smoke, the odor of wine and hot food. A small orchestra whined and banged in one corner; from the low ceiling trailed artificial vines and among the red and yellow leaves, gilt bird cages hung, their bewildered feathery occupants fluttering about upon their perches, distressed by the fetid atmosphere; on each table flickered a candle under a red shade.

Matt's table had been reserved in the center of the room. As they entered, a dark fat Italian with a perspiring face, all smiles, came to meet them, rubbing his hands one over another.

"That's the proprietor," Jack told Sam. "Cæsar Galupi; mighty nice old fellow. He does quite a business here."

"Buona sera—buona sera, signori . . ."

"How's everything, Cæsar?"

"Bene—bene—bene! This your table; everything as you like. *Sbafate questo pranzo!"*

They seated themselves and the *hors d'œuvres* were passed.

"Ah, let's get to the spaghet and the vino," Ritter remarked impatiently. "I hate all these dead fish."

Sam gazed about the room, fascinated by everything. He noted the hanging vines, the wall mirrors that seemed to double its proportions, the artificial palms that half hid the orchestra, the fluttering canary birds, the red reflection of the lamp shades on the table-cloths, the faces of the diners, particularly the women,—a homely lot, amiable, sociable, murmuring and laughing over their warming food. He felt extraordinarily happy; it was an enchanting place.

Pint bottles of wine were placed on the table and several eager hands reached for them. Glasses were filled; some one noticed Sam's empty one.

"Come on, Sam, fill up; we're all going to have a little toast together."

"I don't drink," Sam confessed coloring.

"Oh, hell!" said Matt in disgust.

"It's about time, my boy, you began," Ritter observed.

"Sam," Vin Morrisey said, leaning toward him across the table, "wine is the solace of all human ills; make friends with it early, and stay friends with it long."

"Do you good," said Cheney with an encouraging nod.

Sam laughed with hesitation, grinning back into their interested, friendly faces, while Matt filled his glass. He raised the wine to his lips, and sipped the claret gingerly.

"Bottoms up," said someone.

"Come on, Sam,—down the gullet."

He waited for sensations, but developed none. The room grew warmer, noisier, gayer. A large, full-bosomed Italian woman, tight-corseted and with a sweeping train, mounted the musicians' platform and sang a soprano aria, all trills, runs and high staccato notes. Everyone applauded vigorously. More food appeared—more wine. Sam found himself uproariously laughing at some of Taylor Evans' nonsense. . . . Oh, life and such companionship were wonderful!

The dinner over, they streamed into the street. The cold night was like the slap of an icy wet rag in his hot face. Two hansoms were waiting; they crowded three apiece into each. To be driving up Broadway through the gay flaring gas lamps of the street, the sidewalks seething with people bent upon amusement, the theaters belching light from their doorways, crowds elbowing their way in! . . . Ah, this was life! This was living!

§ 6

The performance, when they reached the theater, had already begun. There was a sibilant "Ssss-h!" from several of the attendants as they noisily entered the foyer. A blast of music greeted them within; first there was darkness, then a glare from the brilliantly lit stage where girls with flower baskets in their hands were weaving in and out; the body of the theater was choked with black silhouetted figures and tiers upon tiers of silhouetted heads.

Sam followed his group, and blindly stumbled into his seat. The picture on the stage dazzled him. It was fairyland, his senses swam, it was utterly, unbelievably, marvelously lovely! . . . The flower girls divided and between their ranks appeared a superb woman clad in spangles and white silk tights, her waist small, her hips huge, her legs beautifully symmetrical, tapering to her ankles.

"That's Della," Ritter whispered in Sam's ear giving him a nudge with his elbow. "How's that for a shape!"

Songs, music, dancing girls, Amazons in spear and helmet, an acrobatic comedian who dived through windows and dropped unexpectedly from concealed entrances,—movement, harmony, glittering tinsel, flashing armor, royal colors, thunderous applause! The act came to a close. Sam blinked as the gas-jets flared up. There was a general stirring, voices, murmurs, fans fluttering, programs flashing white, the great chandelier blazing with pendent prisms, men flocking up the aisles, the musicians ducking out through a hole beneath the stage.

"It isn't over?" Sam gasped.

"Nə-aw,—two more acts. I'm going out for a smoke."

"I got to get something to rid my mouth of that taste of red ink. Feels like a Chinee wash-house."

This was delightful; Matt was a wit, all right. Sam's own mouth felt dry and sour.

Up the aisle, through the foyer they filed and made for a saloon across the street, crowded with other men from the audience.

"Sam—what you going to have?"

"Guess a lemonade would taste good."

"Oh, they haven't got time to mix anything like that now. Want some beer? I'm going to have beer; it will take that damn taste out of your mouth."

But Sam declined. He did not think he wanted anything more. His head was aching a little; he guessed he'd had about enough. He wished they would hurry; he was afraid they would all be late getting back to their seats. They were.

Something was wrong with the second act. It was excessively hot in the theater—stiflingly so. He could not follow clearly what was going on; the singing and the constant blaring of the trumpets bothered his head; the lights became more and more dazzling. He grew drowsy—drowsier and drowsier.

"Come on, Sam; wake up. Let's get out and get some air."

He came to with a wrench. The curtain was down; people were filing out again. His head throbbed; his mouth was bitter and parched.

He drank greedily brimming glasses of water in the saloon across the street, but his thirst was unquenched. Jack Cheney took him in charge.

"Look here, Sam, what you want is a good stiff drink of some kind; you're going to go dead on your feet otherwise."

Sam rebelled. He could not bring himself to consider anything but water, and of that he wanted quantities.

"Well, take some beer, then."

No, he would not be persuaded. The curtain was up, someone announced, and they hurried back.

The last act was a confused babble of noise and voices; enjoyment deserted him. Sleepiness dragged at his senses; again and again he jerked himself back to consciousness. It was no use; he felt himself nodding and slipping in his seat. Once Ritter thrust him back roughly. It was a relief when it was all over, and he could find his feet, get to the street and fresh air once more.

There seemed no hesitation on anyone's part as to what was now to be the program. Sam thought of home, but at his suggestion Cheney slipped his hand through his arm and pulled him along.

"We're all going home pretty soon, Sammy, but we got to have some eats first."

At Fourteenth Street they entered a restaurant. Sam complained of his head; it ached fiercely.

"Food's what you need," Matt assured him. "You get some ham and eggs and some coffee into you and you'll feel like a new man."

It was so; his head began to clear and every minute his spirits rose.

"We'll have one more little drink before we bust up," Matt announced.

They sought a gay and gaudy saloon, sparkling with shining glassware, polished mahogany, and colored art globes. They insisted Sam should have a drink they prescribed. Cheney declared it was his turn to buy after Matt had paid for the first round, and when Sam hesitated over the second glass, Jack put his arm about his shoulders, and said reproachfully:

"You're not going to throw *me* down, Sammy,—are you? You trust me, don't you? I just want you to have this little one with me as a kind of pledge. . . . I'll look after you. You know you and I are pals, don't you? We agreed on that."

Afterwards, Sam's memory of the night was never clear. They lingered at the bar for some time, and there were several more rounds. Then they crowded out through the swing doors and marched down the street, six of them, arm in arm. They were all singing and laughing as the line swayed from side to side and they tried playfully to bump the passers-by. Matt told Sam they were on the Bowery and he remembered his surprise at its breadth and apparent respectability. There followed another theater somewhere. Sam recalled sitting in a box, hanging over the plush rail while his companions joked and called down remarks to the girls on the stage who were trying to sing but who kept laughing back and winking up at them. Presently several of these girls in tights and stage regalia were in the box with them, and there was a great deal of laughing and "joshing," and a waiter who crowded in with a tin tray of slopping beer glasses.

A hiatus followed and Sam's next recollection was of thumping up narrow carpeted stairs. There were more girls here, and a stout woman with an ample bosom and a fat double chin kept repeating: "Now, boys, not too much noise. This isn't Tammany's year, you know." Here a piano jangled, and in an adjoining room men's voices rose now and then, and there was the sound of much rough laughter. Girls in pink and blue draperies came and went. Sam was surprised to see one of them sitting in Ritter's lap, and to see him kissing and fondling her. Then Ritter did something disgusting, and in horror, Sam looked away. Morrisey was declaiming poetry to a tittering companion while Taylor Evans sat at the piano and with one finger, followed his voice down the scale, tone by tone. Trays and trays of beer appeared, borne by a bleary-eyed waiter, the glasses awash, the liquid dripping from their wet bottoms on coat and sleeve. After a long while, some voice,—he thought it was Jack's,—said:

"Oh, let him sleep; I'll take him home."

Another,—a woman's,—added:

"He's kind of cute."

Jack again: "Leave him be."

Then there was another blank, and next, Cheney and himself were stumbling down the narrow carpeted stairs into the cool, revivifying night air.

"Gee, Jack," Sam said thickly, "I'm tired."

"I know you are, old boy. I'll see you get home. Breathe deep, get your lungs full of air. We'll walk; that will set you up."

"What time is it?"

" 'Bout three."

"Gee, I thought it was later. . . . Where we been?"

"Maggie Kruger's. She's a famous old hooker, runs quite a decent house."

"What kind of a house, Jack?"

Cheney told him.

"God, Jack,—have I been in a—in a . . ." Sam stopped short in horror.

"Why, sure,—where did you think you'd been?"

"Oh, God!" Sam whispered. He was wide awake now, his eyes staring. His thoughts flew to Narcissa, his aunt, Ruth; a vision of his mother threatened.

"Oh, *God!*" he said again.

§ 7

"Sam! Sam!—*Sam!*" There was a persistent knocking.

He stirred in agony. Dimly conscious, he recognized Ruth's voice.

"Auntie says for you to hurry. Uncle has to cut the bread this morning."

He managed a hoarse "All right" and reared himself to a sitting posture. His head was splitting, his limbs leaden, his tongue coated and swollen. He rubbed his eyes, and the memory of the night rushed upon him. Remorse! Aaaaaa-h! What had he done?—What *had* he done? He was vile, he was foul, he had sinned!—Quickly came the thought of his uncle and aunt; they mustn't know.

He flung cold water from the basin upon his face and soused his head again and again in its shallow depth. It was Sunday morning and he must shave! Already he was late. He hurried over his dressing, but was forced every now and then to cover his eyes with a hand and compress his lips and teeth against the waves of giddy sickness that swept over him. He put on the new suit again, and as he struggled into the coat, a nauseating smell reached his nostrils which he located with reluctant sniffs; it was his sleeve: stale beer!

"Marty will give you your breakfast in the kitchen," his aunt told him when he appeared in the dining-room doorway. "I had to get the table ready for your uncle and Elder Simpson; I expect him any minute now. . . . We were obliged to have prayers without you," she said reproachfully, "and your uncle was not pleased."

"Sorry, Aunt Sarah. I just didn't hear a thing until Ruth called."

"What time did you come in?" she asked.

"About . . . well, I guess it was after midnight," he answered, conscious his words did not actually constitute a lie.

"Oh, that's too late—too late, Samuel. A growing boy working as hard as you do, needs every hour of sleep he can get. You ought to be in bed every night of your life by ten o'clock. Late hours never benefited anyone. You look quite pale this morning——"

"Aunt-ie!" It was Ruth. The girl was always saving him.

"Yes, I'm coming. . . . You'll find Marty has everything ready for you in the kitchen."

Sam had no desire for food; he craved water. He filled the tin dipper at the sink and drank leisurely, luxuriantly. After a pretense of eating, he slipped out of the house. It was a glittering December morning, sharp and cold, pale sunlight deluged the streets. He wanted to walk, clear his head, and think.

The feeling of sin weighed upon him oppressively. He was not fit to breathe the same atmosphere as decent people. He felt wicked; he could never go back and be clean again, as he had been twenty-four hours ago. He longed for an atonement,—a price to pay for his misconduct.

Jack, Matt, Vin, and the rest were not to blame; he could find no condemnation in his heart for them nor loss of esteem. They had their own standards; each of these new friends was a prince of good fellows, moving in a world far above his own; he, himself, was but a farmer's boy. There was no place for him in such company. . . . But to give them up, to renounce their comradeship, their generous friendship, never to be amongst them and laugh with them again, or sit at table convivially with them! Was this expected of him? With all the passionate hunger of his young heart he wanted to be with them and of them. Was renouncing their society the penalty he must pay for his debauch? Conscience, reason told him yes. He had not sufficient money to associate with them; they were older, more experienced, they belonged to a different world. Mr. Wright had warned him, had spoken of self-denial, and pleasures to be forsworn. Some of his words came back to Sam as he plodded thoughtfully along.

"Beware of sinful pleasures, Sam. . . . Feel that each day you have denied yourself something . . . that builds character, my boy, that will make you strong as iron. . . ."

Yes,—but he *couldn't* do this, he *couldn't* give up Jack Cheney!

The church bells reminded him of the hour. He hurried back and was just in time to join his aunt and Ruth as they were about to leave the house. The long service ahead of him filled him with dread; he was in no mood to worship God.

Yet in spite of himself as he sat in his uncle's pew with closed lids, resting his eyes and mind, the peace, quiet, and orderliness of the church calmed and comforted him. The

organ trembled softly and soothingly. There was goodness here and he wanted goodness. He wished he might hear Adrian Lane sing "Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet," but instead, during the offertory the choir rendered a long, involved cantata in which the soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass repeated "Amen" over and over again: "A-a-a-a—a—men, A-men, A-men, A-a-aaaaa-men."

At its conclusion, Dr. McIntosh came forward to the pulpit, looked out solemnly over his audience, lifted his large hand, bent his leonine head, and after the congregation had rustled to its knees, began to pray.

Sam listened to the familiar phrases, as methodically the minister proceeded through the category of importuned blessings and proffered thanks, but presently Sam turned his thoughts to his own soul. He was eager to make peace with God, yet it seemed basely hypocritical. Still in physical discomfort from the previous night's orgy, his breath yet foul from his intemperance, was he fit to kneel thus before God's altar and ask forgiveness? Was he honest in his remorse or was he whipped to his repentance by the mere misery of his head and stomach? . . . No, he *was* sorry! He was *truly* sorry! He wanted to make amends. If God would forgive him, cleanse his soul, make him fit and clean and good again, he would lead a new life, he would—yes, he would give up these genial, kindly new friends,—*he would give up Jack Cheney!* He made his vow, and at once there rushed from him a tumultuous prayer for forgiveness. His plea and supplication could rise now, where before his lips had been locked. Peace, a sense of grace and absolution flooded him, and as he rose from his knees with the rest of the congregation, his eyes were wet.

He was prepared to give his whole attention to the sermon, but Dr. McIntosh had the problem of the church debt still confronting him; twenty thousand dollars had yet to be raised and the minister declared he felt it to be his bounden duty to make another appeal to the generosity of his parishioners. They must find it in their hearts and in their pockets, he told them, to give more.

Sam decided it was his own physical discomfort which made the Doctor seem tiresome that morning. He determined to drop his weekly dollar again into the plate; it represented an additional penance and he was glad to make it. His head

throbbed; the emotion he had experienced during the prayer had made the pain worse; his whole system was in revolt. . . . Doctor McIntosh appeared wound up; Sam had never seen him pound the pulpit more violently or gesticulate more energetically; his stentorian tones seemed to shake the very building. It was a full five minutes beyond closing time before he brought his exhortations to an end. . . . The worst part of the morning was over. There remained only the communion service and the Bible Class. If he had been able to endure so much, he felt he could stick it out until all was over.

Church with its hymns, prayers, and sermon had been repugnant to him; but the thought now of the intimate, holy sacrament to follow was infinitely more disquieting. Sam felt his soul and body to be still unclean, unworthy to receive the tokens of Christ's sufferings; he did not want to commit a sacrilege; something within him rebelled at the unseemliness of the deed. Yet with his aunt and uncle beside him he dared not refuse "to receive." Two of the Elders were bearing the plate of neatly cut cubes of bread and the tray of small individual glasses filled with the sacramental wine, and were moving from pew to pew about the church. Sam prayed that his act might be understood. He tried to fix his mind on Dr. McIntosh's words, tried to feel satisfied that having acknowledged his sin and having humbly and penitently asked forgiveness, he was once more worthy. His head still rocked, his stomach was still in misery. As the Elders gravely approached sweat broke out upon his forehead.

The crumb of bread stuck dryly in his throat, but he managed to gulp it down. As he held the tiny wine glass in his hand, his fingers shook and he rested them a moment against the back of the pew before which he knelt. The smell of the wine sickened him, but he nerved himself to swallow it. As he raised it to his lips, a vision of that awful house with the carpeted narrow stairs flashed before him, he saw the flushed distorted faces, the bleary-eyed waiter like the reverend Elder bearing a tray of glasses and offering him a drink, and he saw Ritter with the girl in his lap!

He choked, the wine caught in his windpipe, he strangled, coughed, gasping for breath, his handkerchief at his mouth; the tiny glass fell from his convulsed hand and tinkled to the floor, shivered in pieces.

CHAPTER IX

§ 1

With the beginning of the new year, Jerry Haines engineered a fair-sized raise for Sam at the office. He felt he was getting on very well in his work, and he had the satisfaction of knowing he had attracted the attention of the junior partner. Mr. Faber was a squat, square man, far more approachable and agreeable than Mr. Hartshone,—and younger. He was, Sam suspected, a Hebrew, probably of German extraction, although he understood Mr. Faber disclaimed the Jewish origin. His part of the business was the selling end, and he had charge of the city and traveling salesmen. Sam encountered him late one Saturday afternoon just as he was about to go home. Faber appeared in the wide doorway of the stock-room, and looked about in dismay at its emptiness. All the other workmen had gone.

"Say, by golly Mike, I guess I'm too lade!" He spoke with a thick Teutonic accent. Sam hastened forward.

"Want me, Mr. Faber?"

"Say—" Mr. Faber surveyed him, troubled. "I vant some of you fellows to come oop to my house to-morrow. I got some moving to be done."

"I could come after church or maybe my uncle would let me off church altogether if I explained to him you wanted me."

"Vell, you do dat, and come oop after your breakfass,—'bout nine."

Sam found his uncle quite amiable about the matter.

"Yes, yes, I see," he said thoughtfully, rubbing his lean chin, "it puts you in touch with your employer—gives you a chance to establish a personal relationship with him. Very good—very good. . . . I think church can spare you. . . . I'll explain to Mr. Wright."

Sam was duly grateful for the permission, and presented

himself a little after the suggested hour the following day at Mr. Faber's home in West Twenty-second Street. It was a brown-stone house much like that of Uncle Cyrus. A line of these solemn-faced, uncompromising buildings flanked either side of the street and stared at one another all day out of four stories of curtained windows; they suggested sphinxes squatting upon their haunches, their stoops like half-hidden fore paws curled beneath their flat fronts. The atmosphere of the neighborhood was modest; respectability sat heavily upon it.

Inside, the house was gloomy, but its rooms were large and well proportioned. There were double doors to the high-ceilinged parlor,—heavy doors of red-toned mahogany,—Gothic-shaped at top to fit the generous archway in which they swung. The parlor floor was hardwood, marquetried around the borders, and spread with rich-looking rugs including several furs, an angora, and a polar bear skin with a large noble head that menaced one with large glittering glass eyes, and a red cavernous mouth filled with sharp-pointed white fangs. Satin-covered chairs faced one another while glass cabinets containing curios and bric-a-brac occupied spaces between doors and windows. The walls were cluttered with many pictures,—heavy gilt-framed canvases they were for the most part,—while rich brocades, fringed and looped back with thick silk ropes, curtained the tall windows. In the shadowy corners, vases, white statuary and bronzes stood on pedestals, among them a tall harp sheathed in a gray covering. The room was far too crowded, but an atmosphere of richness, art treasures, and refinement pervaded it.

The walls, it appeared, were to be repapered, and the floor "gone over"; the workmen were due to arrive on Monday morning and the furniture, including a large square piano, and all the paintings and statuary, had to be removed, some to the hallway, some to the cellar, some into the adjoining dining-room.

Sam took off his coat and went willingly at the task. Mrs. Faber,—a rather stately person of more culture than her husband and clearly not of his race,—superintended his operations. She was very gracious in her manner and generous in her encouragement. About moving the piano, she was fearful; it was an exceptionally fine instrument and she was anxious it should not be injured. With the help of the Irish delivery

boy from the corner grocery, Sam successfully engineered it into another room. His unusual strength was freely commented upon, and his labors applauded by the two Faber children,—Paula, a girl of twelve, with black hair artificially curled into long ringlets, and a seven-year-old boy, Eugene, whose distinctly curved little nose clearly betrayed his father's race. They were nice children, Sam thought, and their mother a lovely woman. By twelve o'clock his work was finished, and a substantial lunch set out for him on the broad serving shelf in the pantry. Mr. Faber brought a bottle of beer from the ice-box and drank it with him, saying: *"Gesundheit!"* and presented a handful of cigars. Sam was flattered by the consideration shown him, and glad of the opportunity to establish friendly relations with one of his employers.

§ 2

In winter-time it was not nearly so pleasant in the warehouse as it had been during summer and fall. The temperature was often freezing. All day long, Sam wore two sweaters and a pair of fingerless gloves; puffs of vapor left his lips at every breath, his hands grew numb, and his feet became so cold during the last hours of the afternoon that the pain was almost more than he could bear.

But he loved the winter evenings at home. He and Ruth fell into the habit of playing double solitaire in the upstairs' sitting-room. Uncle Cyrus was generally there studying his next Sunday's lesson for his class of girls from the pages of *The Weekly Sabbath School Teachers' Guide and Helper,* and Aunt Sarah's hands were usually busy with sewing, or the pages of Dr. Andrew McIntosh's published sermons. Often there was a church social in the Sunday-school Parlors or a stereopticon lecture in the auditorium of the church proper with views of Palestine, or "Joppa," "Jerusalem," "The Egypt of the Israelites." Wednesday night was prayer meeting and immediately after it came the gathering in Mr. Wright's rooms on Stuyvesant Square.

These weekly assemblages were the brightest spots in Sam's days during his first winter. He learned to drink his stein of beer, to smoke a pipe with the rest of the company, and to feel himself at last part of the circle, even to contribute something

to the general sociability. Now and then a new personality would drop in, and the fresh face lent a certain stimulus to the evening's program. Mr. Wright read aloud "Marmion," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "Pauline Pavlovna," "Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Man Without a Country,"—a heterogeneous collection, but Sam found it all enjoyable. In the absence of Cheney, Vin Morrisey and Taylor Evans became Sam's favorites in the group. The former always had something interesting to relate, and Evans' good-natured, tolerant manner with his deep drawling voice had the effect of putting Sam at his ease. On Sunday afternoons he sometimes walked up Third Avenue to Taylor's bookshop and dropped in upon him. The little store was closed on this day of the week, but Sam's three raps on the glass brought the young proprietor from his lair in the rear,—a box-like little room in which he slept, ate, and cooked his meals, and where he was kept company by a great Persian cat with topaz eyes whom he called "Pasht." Taylor usually brewed himself a cup of tea at this hour, and Sam enjoyed these visits as the two sucked their pipes and sipped the hot drink in the stuffy little room, heated by a vigorous tiny air-tight stove, and discussed politics, books, religion, the usual things that stir young men's minds. Taylor confessed to Sam that his ambition was to write,—stories of contemporary life, bits of every-day human existence. He already had five hundred pages of a book finished, but he was somewhat discouraged about it as he had not as yet reached the story part.

Two or three weeks passed before Sam found Jack Cheney again at Mr. Wright's. Their meeting was marked by warmth on both sides.

"Come round Saturday night," Cheney suggested. "Ritter'll be there and the four of us will have a quiet little dinner at Galupi's. Perhaps we'll play some cards up in our room afterwards."

The readiness with which Sam agreed surprised himself. Parting with his friend later that same evening and walking alone the short distance to his home, he asked himself if he was doing right. On that Sunday after the orgy, he had vowed he would cut short this intimacy, and now at the first opportunity he found himself renewing it. Was merely spending a quiet evening in Jack's company compromising with

his conscience? He could not tell. He wanted to go with all his heart. He told himself that another evening in Cheney's company, innocent and unregrettable, would go far toward blotting out the memory of that first unhappy night, which, after all, had been an accident. It was not as if he had deliberately planned to make a beast of himself.

He was satisfied he had decided wisely, after the entirely satisfactory dinner at Galupi's on the evening in question, and the amusing hours of cards with his friends that followed. With their meal, each enjoyed a little wine, and later they adjourned to the room on Christopher Street where the table was cleared of its litter of papers and books, and Sam initiated into the mysteries of poker, which did not appear to him to be very mysterious at all because, at the conclusion of the game, his stack of chips was counted, and it was found he had won eighty cents. Midnight had not yet arrived when he climbed the front steps of his uncle's house.

§ 3

The cold weather merged into the warm days of spring without his noticing the change. One day while he was hurrying through a rush of unexpected orders, he suddenly found himself perspiring freely, and it was with vast relief he wrenched off his two sweaters. There was no longer any need for them.

His days, as his twenty-first birthday approached, were happier ones than he had ever known. His work satisfied him, he considered he was earning a good wage, he liked Jerry Haines and the other men at the shop, his hours at home in the quiet evenings over solitaire with Ruth were pleasant, the Wednesday gatherings after prayer meeting a weekly joy, and most delightful of all were the occasional Saturday nights he spent with Jack Cheney and Matt Madison in the topsy-turvy but cheerful and homelike room on Christopher Street.

Spring slipped by imperceptible degrees into summer and the hot days were upon him before he was aware. He loved the city in its new furbishing of green; the last of April had seen the parks and trees along the curbs still bare, June found them in heavy mantle and the sun beat down with July's heat. All year he had planned to spend his first fortnight's vacation with

Phineas and Narcissa in Framingham. His sister wrote him now and then, but he, himself, was a poor correspondent; his penmanship was atrocious and he was ashamed of it; his letters were few and far between. Narcissa promised him a good loaf during his two weeks of freedom in August, but little in the way of diversion for she would have to be very quiet during this time as a baby was expected soon. Sam was curiously stirred by the thought of his sister becoming a mother. . . . Narciss' with a baby of her own! . . . It was amazing! He had never considered such a possibility. Julia was coming down from Boston to be in attendance during her confinement, and Sam suspected that his being there at the same time might be inconvenient. The house, he remembered, was not large.

While he was debating the matter, Vin Morrisey suggested a fourteen days' tramp through the Adirondacks where he planned to do some bird photography, and Sam happily accepted. It proved a memorable experience. They took a river boat as far as Hudson and struck directly into the hills, carrying a blanket apiece and a little food. Sometimes they begged a meal, sometimes paid for one, sometimes worked half a day at some camp for dinner and a night's lodging. Morrisey showed the most extraordinary patience in securing his photographs, often lying still for hours after his camera was in position waiting for a mother bird to return to her nest before jerking the string that released the shutter. He displayed an astonishing knowledge of trees, shrubs, and fauna in general, and returned at the end of the tour with two shoe boxes slung about his neck in which he had collected specimens of truffles.

An extraordinary character, Sam thought him, and a most interesting companion. He wondered what he would make of himself in life. It was hard to guess. Vin would often be lifted into a kind of exaltation by the beauty of a vista through the hills and sometimes by no more than the splendid marshalling of clouds. At Lake Occopatchuon they had fine swimming and fishing, and Vin showed Sam how to catch trout with the hand by tickling their bellies, how to slit and clean them without a knife, and how to bake them on hot rocks. Never was there such food in the world!

Sam came back to the city, burned brown, healthy and bounding with youth and vitality.

§ 4

The next two years for him were much like his first. The routine of the weeks and months differed but slightly. There was no change at the office except that Haines succeeded in obtaining two small increases in salary for him; Mr. Faber continued to show a friendly interest. At home, life proceeded in the same uneventful way. During the second summer, Sam paid the visit to Narcissa he had postponed the first year, and went to her and his brother-in-law for his fortnight's vacation. He found her absorbed in her little Mary, an adoring and devoted mother. Phineas was wrapped up in business; he had bought out Zeb Harris and had established branch general stores in Milford and Natick. Both he and his wife marveled greatly at the amazing change in Sam, his citified air, his man-of-the-world manner. Julia, they told him, had been made principal of one of the Boston public schools.

Back in New York once more, Sam found that Mr. Wright's lively interest in him and his affairs had noticeably waned, although he still was friendly and cordial. A new young man, Stanford Marsh, was now the favorite. Marsh was the son of Nicholas Marsh, proprietor of a large dry goods house on Broadway where fashionable ladies did their shopping. Sam never heard just how or where Mr. Wright made Stanford's acquaintance, but one Sunday morning he brought him into the Bible Class and introduced him in his hearty way, an arm around his shoulders, announcing he would soon be one of "Christ's standard-bearers." Sam did not like the newcomer particularly. He had almond-shaped eyes, long black lashes, lips that wore a supercilious smirk, and a silly vacuous laugh. He wore rings and was dandified in manner; in the phraseology of the day, he was a "dude." Adrian Lane detested him, and, as a result, Sam was witness to a furious quarrel between the young singer and his patron. They both turned to Sam for judgment; Adrian criticized Stanford Marsh in unsparing language, declaring he would not remain in the same room with him. He refused to appear at the Bible Class and absented himself from the Wednesday meetings. Mr. Wright in turn complained that Adrian was unreasonable and selfish. There was no justice in his objection to Stanford Marsh. He, Mr. Wright, was the friend of all deserving young men; Stan-

ford needed his moral guidance and advice as much as any of the others; he had come to him in trouble,—a private matter,—and Mr. Wright considered it his Christian duty to give him all the help he asked. Sam was deeply embarrassed one night when he happened to be alone with Mr. Wright in his rooms, and the man wearied him by going over and over his tale of grievances against Adrian, to have him suddenly burst into tears.

"Ah, Sam—Sam," he said, blubbering like a school-boy, "you don't know what I've done for Adrian,—what he was when I took him and taught him and trained him! He was a wretched, poor little orphan,—a waif of the streets. I've given him everything! I've denied him nothing! No father could do more for a son than I've done for Adrian. There's nothing he has ever asked of me that I've refused. . . . And he treats me like a dog,—like the dirt under his feet, humiliates me, and insults me! You've heard him,—you know the things he says to me right before everyone!"

It was a long, meandering, disjointed complaint, now furious in its reproaches, now strangely moving in its eagerness for sympathy.

Sam's first revulsion soon gave place to pity. The man's grief was real; his utter demoralization a distressing spectacle. Sam would have been glad to help him had he seen a way. Adrian was a spoiled, wilful, egotistical boy, the logical result of Mr. Wright's pampering. He could get along now without the man, but the man still needed him. Sam urged Mr. Wright to drop Stanford Marsh, but this he resolutely refused to do. No, said he, it was the principle that was at stake,—he wasn't going to give in to Adrian any more.

The matter ended by Mr. Wright sending Adrian to Paris to study music and voice culture. Sam laughed rather dryly when he learned of the compromise. It was characteristic of Mr. Wright to have decided upon such a solution of the difficulty. Of course, Adrian had gladly agreed.

Stanford Marsh was now quite the feature of the Wednesday evening gatherings, and Sam did not attend them with the regularity that had been his wont. Mr. Wright seemed to grow very wordy and unctuous, and further acquaintance with Marsh did not improve first impressions.

He saw more of the group that frequented Jack's and Matt's room on Christopher Street. His friends usually gathered

there on Saturday night, dined at some neighboring French or Italian restaurant where a fifty-cent table d'hote was served, and went to Koster and Bial's, or Proctor's, or a musical show where they occupied front row seats in the gallery. Afterwards they either gathered around a table at Lüchow's and drank steins of imported beer, ate fat frankfurters and mounds of stringy sauerkraut, or went to one of the tawdry music halls where they danced with the girls and bought them drinks. Sam came to know many of the habitués of such places by sight and by name. He had thought them all harpies and vampires; he found that many of them were very human, likable creatures, living a life that was both hard and repugnant to them; it was the only way open to keep soul and body together. A virtuous existence on the three to five dollars a week which was the wage then paid for unskilled female help in New York was practically impossible for these girls. He came to appreciate they viewed life with a certain grim fatality. Either some man would appear who would take a fancy to them, provide a home and pay the bills, or else, in a very few years, there was what they flippantly alluded to as "the gas, or river route," less agreeable but certainly more definite ways of escape. Sam was amazed at the cheerful acceptance of the prospect life held out to them. They all interested him as characters, and Taylor Evans had the faculty of drawing their histories out of them to which Sam liked to listen. He never could bring himself to treat them with the familiarity of Ritter, Matt Madison, or even Jack.

§ 5

As the son of Nicholas Marsh, Stanford Marsh had plenty of leisure to spare and cash to spend, and it was soon evident to all that he had begun to devote himself to Ruth. He accompanied her to the church socials and frequently attached himself to the family group on its way home after Sunday service. He had finally the impertinence, so Sam felt, to call, and he would murmur with Ruth in the downstairs parlor while Sam fumed in the sitting-room above. What exasperated him was the approval Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah lent to these attentions. He, himself, could not tolerate the young man whose appearance offended him and whose manner was patronizing.

He believed that Ruth, in her heart, shared his antipathy. But every circumstance seemed to combine to throw the young girl into Stanford's society, and eventually a day came when, after he had followed Ruth home after church, Aunt Sarah asked him to remain for dinner. Sam sat through the meal in sulphurous silence. His aunt was greatly annoyed with him and when Ruth had gone out for a stroll with the guest, she asked him to step to the sitting-room where she took him to task for his ungraciousness.

"I just want to say, Samuel," she said, her bony wrists crossed in her lap, "that you mustn't be rude at my table. Mr. Marsh is an attractive young man, and his means are well known. Ruth is eighteen, and it is only natural that such an attractive girl should have admirers. Ruth will marry some day, I earnestly hope. It probably won't be Mr. Marsh, although there is nothing against the young man that I can see. Your uncle has looked him up and is entirely satisfied. That should be sufficient for you, Samuel. In any case, we want Ruth to marry well. . . . Now, Samuel, I want to have a frank talk with you. Your uncle and I have often discussed this matter; we had to when you came to live here amongst us. There's no real impediment to prevent you and Ruth some day marrying,—you aren't blood relations, that is,—but I earnestly and devoutly hope such an unfortunate thing will never happen. I've watched you very closely and I must say I've seen no nonsense about you. Ruth is well brought up, she's a refined, accomplished girl, and she ought to make an elegant match. You, of course, have no prospects. I mean this kindly, Samuel. What your uncle has will naturally go to Ruth. You mustn't expect him to leave you a penny. I trust the dear man will live for many years, but you mustn't entertain any false hopes about a rich inheritance. I think it's only wise to let you know this. You're doing very well here, much better, I confess, than I thought probable, and your uncle hears good reports of you. But it will be many years before you can support a wife in the comfort, and I may say, luxury to which Ruth has been accustomed ever since she came to us after my poor sister's death. You surely must see that; you surely must see that it would be quite unfair to Ruth. . . . Well, then, you must help her attract nice young men about her. I've heard you speak admiringly of Mr. Cheney and—what's his name?—Mr. Madison. Now if these young men have prospects and seem to

you eligible and worthy, you should arrange to bring them here to meet Ruth. There's no objection that I can see to Mr. Stanford Marsh; I think he's very handsome and certainly he appears to be most attentive. His father's a prominent merchant here and if Ruth should care for him——"

"But she doesn't and she won't!" Sam burst out. It seemed a terrible thing to him to have his aunt thus conniving in cold blood at a match between little Ruth and this insufferable bounder.

"Tut—tut, Samuel," said Mrs. Smith with asperity, "that's no way to talk! What do you know of a young girl's heart? What right have you to say she cares or doesn't care?"

What right indeed? he asked himself when he had made his escape. He had never thought of marrying Ruth, had never thought of her as a marriageable person,—and above all had never thought of inheriting from his uncle! Stanford Marsh was a well-groomed and perfumed lap dog, nothing more, utterly unsuitable for a girl as fine and innocent as Ruth. The thought of her marrying him was horrible! He hated his aunt for her implications.

CHAPTER X

§ 1

When it was ascertained that Jack and Matt had passed their final examinations and would definitely graduate, the two embryo doctors planned a night of celebration. It was to be a merry and a sad affair,—merry because it signalized the winning of their degrees, sad because it would mark the breaking up of the little group that had met on so many felicitous occasions during the past two-and-a-half years. Matt was to sail immediately for Europe, but Jack had first to visit his married brother in Canton, Ohio. Vin Morrisey, too, was going away. He had a wild scheme of working his way down to Buenos Aires, crossing over the Andes to Valparaiso and coming north again to San Francisco as a deck-hand or stoker on some tramp steamer. He had already booked a job on a cattle-boat to Rio Janeiro, and was scheduled to leave in less than a week. It would be the last evening the six young men would probably ever be together and they prepared to have as festive a time as possible. Matt staged the dinner in a private room at Delmonico's and there was to be a box at an extravaganza afterwards. Sam was the only one of the group who did not appear in a dress suit when they assembled, but they would brook no word of apology from him. They called him affectionate epithets and told him to shut up. He had never tasted champagne before, and remembering the first occasion when this congenial group had gathered together, he decided to be careful.

The dinner in the private room was anything but a success. There was no music nor any gay atmosphere of conviviality. Jack confided to Sam that Galupi's, with its familiar walls, its coarse table-cloths, its fly-specked artificial vines, its tried old table d'hote and good red claret would have been a better place for the party. The ornate, gilt mirrors, the rich red upholstery

and gleaming polished floors, the sumptuous luxury of Delmonico's awed and oppressed them; the deft French waiters hurried them through the meal, whisking dishes off and on, one course promptly following another. Ritter called for more wine, insisting that the evening would be a failure unless they warmed up. But the extra bottle appeared to have no effect. They soberly raised their thin-stemmed glasses, clinked their rims, sipped the sparkling beverage until it was gone, and continued to finger the silver-ware absently during the silences that would not be banished.

Matt rose in exasperation at length, called for the bill, paid it, and led his friends out of the brilliant restaurant to a saloon near by, where he insisted that each one of them have what he described as "a man-sized drink." He lamented the course the evening was taking; it was their last night together, he reminded them, and they were all behaving like mourners at a funeral. But gaiety, it seemed, could not be captured. Soberly they climbed into cabs, soberly they drove to the theater, soberly they filed into their spacious box, soberly viewed what they agreed was a tame and dull entertainment; even Sam watched it without enthusiasm. After it was over, they gathered on the corner of the street and stared at each other blankly.

"Oh, let's go some place that's jolly!" Ritter exclaimed. "Let's get rid of this damn gloom."

They agreed that this was the thing to do, but none of the half-hearted suggestions advanced sounded inviting. No one wanted food, no one wanted to drink, and yet none of them was willing to break up and say good night.

"Let's go to Molla's," Ritter kept insisting. "There'll be girls there and we can watch them dancing and maybe have some fun."

He was more earnest than the rest and they let him lead the way. Sam had never been to Molla's; he had heard the others speak of the place and was curious to see what it was like.

The parlor floor of what had once been a fine brown-stone residence, the extra large rooms joined together into one that extended the full depth of the house; tables ranged along the walls, a rectangular space in the middle of the floor for dancing, a Negro orchestra, in which banjos were prominent; not a flower nor a picture nor an inviting note in the place,—this was Molla's. Sam was surprised and disappointed at its bareness.

Beneath it, in the basement of the old house, was a German restaurant-bar which seemed to be under a different management. The rest of the building was a dark region, given over, Matt opined, to private rooms.

There were not more than a dozen persons in the place when the six young men entered. A few couples were scattered at the different tables, and at one four girls were dispiritedly conversing across a bare cloth. The orchestra was droning out a half-hearted dance, the waiters were leaning against the walls; a sad weariness prevailed, but new life seemed to energize everyone as Sam and his companions made their way towards a large round table in a corner. Napkins flourished, chairs were pulled out and pushed solicitously beneath them as they seated themselves. The four girls covertly eyed them from their own table, and whispered to each other. Soiled and purple-inked menus in celluloid holders were presented, but these were waved aside and Ritter ordered drinks.

"The place will liven up by and by," he assured his companions, "it's early yet. They don't begin to get going here until after twelve."

Cigarettes were passed, the young men lounged in their chairs, the round of drinks appeared.

"What do you think of that bunch over there?"

Ritter twisted himself round to inspect the girls, studying them critically.

"I don't know any of them," he observed; "the black one isn't such a bad looker. . . . I'll try her out. . . ."

He went over to them and the girl with the black hair and dress rose at his nod; he put his arm about her and they glided away onto the floor.

"Go try the one in green," Cheney urged his roommate.

"Aaaa-w,—I don't feel like dancing," Matt answered spiritlessly.

"Oh, for heaven's sake! Throw some liquor into you. You're glum as an oyster."

"Well, let's have another round. . . ."

"I'll try your Emerald Isle . . ." Taylor Evans said and departed.

Other merrymakers began to trickle in,—groups of two and four,—occasionally, girls without escort.

When the dance was finished, Ritter brought his partner over to his friends and introduced her.

"Miss Flynn—Jack, Sam, Matt, and Vin. Here we are, boys; this is Miss Myrtle Flynn. . . . She's a peach."

"Peach" was new,—the latest slang and it drew forth appreciative smiles.

Taylor followed Ritter's example with the girl in green. Her name was Miss Dale. Both girls were young,—not the hardened sort,—and had rather pleasant if vacuous faces. Miss Flynn would have been distinctly pretty, had it not been for her rather loose mouth and bad teeth.

"How about your friends? Don't they want to come over?" Vin nodded at the others.

The ladies exchanged glances.

"Guess they'd love it. We've been awfully lonesome. There hasn't been anyone round here for a week . . . it's been dead. . . ."

Miss Dale was beckoning.

"Dais' . . . Evelyn. . . ."

Their friends rose, gathering up purses and handkerchiefs, and came toward them; chairs were pushed back, others pushed between. Sam found himself with one of the newcomers on either side of him.

Another tray of drinks appeared. Gaiety began to assert itself among the young men; the depression that had weighed down their spirits all evening commenced to lift. The girls were friendly and likable; they fell to talking, giggling, laughing, and Sam felt happiness creep upon him and a glow suffuse his body. With each fresh burst of music, the dancers rose and made their way to the floor and began to revolve to the measures of the waltz and a new solemn caper known as the "two-step." As the evening progressed the company about the table became better and better acquainted.

"Say, Vin, give me a cigarette, will you? I'm simply dying for one; I'm going out in the dressing-room to smoke it. Don't it beat all, they won't let women smoke out here?"

"Why won't they?"

"Oh, some silly old law."

"Give me a drag off yours," said the girl at Sam's left. She drew the smoke deep into her lungs and hid the exhalation behind her handkerchief. There was something pathetically appealing about her, Sam thought, as he watched. She was the least attractive of the four, frail-looking with ropes of pale straw-colored hair, and straw-colored brows and lashes. She

was thin, and her eyes,—liquid blue eyes they were with a transparent quality to them,—were set in rings of shadow.

"You're Evelyn?" Sam asked. She nodded and drained her glass without looking at him.

"What's yours?"

"Sam,—Samuel Smith."

She turned toward him and gave him a glance half doubting, half accusing.

"It really *is* 'Smith,'" he assured her, laughing goodnaturedly; "'Samuel Osgood Smith' if you want the whole of it." He drew an envelope from his pocket and showed her his name and address. It was a letter he had recently received from Narcissa.

The girl took it from him and studied the postmark.

"Do you know anybody in Framingham?" she asked.

"Yes, my sister lives there. . . . Is that your home?"

"No-o. I come from out West,—Grand Island. . . . D'j'ever been in Grand Island? It's a jay place. . . . I know where Framingham is, though. I got a friend that lived there once."

"What's her name?"

"It ain't a 'she.'"

"Well, a 'he,' then. What's his name?"

"Oh, I don't know. Don't make no diff', does it?"

Companionably they continued chatting, exchanging views about New York. Evelyn had been in the city about the same length of time as Sam. She declared she hated it.

"You would, too," she told him when he asked the reason, "if you'd had the deal here that I've had. Oh, New York's a terrible place," she finished with almost a shudder.

"You going to stay here?"

"Well, I guess I got to."

Sam wondered what the problem of such a girl might be; she seemed so frail, so ill-equipped to make any kind of a struggle.

The big room was full now, all the tables occupied, and some anxious couples blocked the doorway. There was plenty of vim and snap to the music now, the Negroes pounded and thumped their instruments, swaying in the kind of rhythmic unison, venting cries and shouts occasionally to encourage the dancers; the drummer threw his sticks in the air and clashed his cymbals, the banjo players bent double over their instruments, thrashing the strings, teeth gleaming, eyeballs rolling.

Waiters bearing high above their heads trays of glasses made a perilous passage across the dancing floor. It grew warm and odorous. The smell of perspiration, cigarettes, sachet, perfume, and food mingled. The murmur of voices and talk increased; now and then there was a woman's high-pitched laugh and the deeper note of a man's mirth. Noise—color—movement,—movement—color—noise. It was like a great whirlpool gradually spinning faster and faster.

Sam felt luxuriously content and comfortable. His senses swam lazily in the confusion and turmoil. Sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch,—all were engaged. The music throbbed and thrummed, the revolving couples in their bright colors held his eyes, the provocative essence of powder and perfume tickled his nostrils, his cigarette tasted good, his glass was refreshing,—Evelyn's thin little hand lay like a flower in his beneath the table.

She went away with Vin to the dancing floor and Sam suddenly felt deserted, injured. Rousing himself, he found food before him; it had been there some time and was cold now. Across the table, the Flynn girl and Matt were murmuring, their heads close together; Taylor and Jack argued heatedly some question of politics; the girl called "Daisy" had drifted to another table; Kitty Dale was eating a hearty meal in a business-like way; Ritter had disappeared.

Sam gazed out into the crowded floor looking for Vin and Evelyn. Presently he saw them and she smiled,—a wonderful smile,—over Vin's shoulder. He laughed confusedly and made a motion toward her with his hand. When she came back, he rose politely and held her chair.

Settling himself next to her when she was seated, he put one elbow on the table, and stared into her face, seeking her hand. Her small fingers nestled into his affectionately, confidently, and she returned his look, her own blue eyes growing dark, a slow smile illuminating her sweet, thin countenance. Not for an instant did their steady gaze waver, now. The irises of the blue eyes seemed to grow larger and larger, crowding out the white, filling the entire face, the room, the whole world. Deep down in Sam, a flood began to pour upward, surging through all his veins, wave upon wave, thumping against his heart, pounding against the roof of his head. It blinded him, he felt suffocated. He shook himself and reached for his glass. . . . God!

"What you do, Sam?"

"Oh, I got a job,—I work."

"Where?"

He told her,—she must not think him like one of his gay companions decked out in dress suits,—and he told her what he earned.

"And your folks? Where do they live?"

He told her about them, too.

"And you? Tell me about yourself?" he asked in turn.

"Oh,—me? There ain't much to tell about me." She laughed deprecatingly. There was something about her laugh and the pinched expression in her face that caught at the boy's heart. The prick of tears stung his eyeballs.

"Say, Evelyn," he said earnestly, bending closer, "go on, tell me. Let's you and me be friends,—will you?"

She turned her liquid blue, transparent eyes upon him and they too glistened.

"Aw, say," she said brusquely with a shrug, "let's not get sentimental!"

Sam edged nearer, he poured hot words into her ear, his voice trembled.

"Well-l," she said slowly, "it's just the old story: I was deserted . . . they're *all* deserted," she laughed harshly.

"How? Tell me?" Sam persisted.

The girl traced a design on the table-cloth with a fork prong.

"I was a fool, I guess. . . . We're all fools. . . . I had a good home out in Grand Island,—my folks were real nice people. . . . Oh, you may or may not believe it,—don't make no diff'! . . . There was a fellow,—an actor,—who came to town and I liked him. He was a New York man, but the company came from Chicago. I had a crazy girl's mash on him, I guess. I believed him; I thought he meant to do right by me. We ran away together to Chicago and got married. Yes, we got married,—but I don't know how many times he'd done it before,"—there was the hard laugh again,—"and then he just quit me,—went off with a rich widow!"

She put out her hands expressively.

Sam caught one of them to his lips and kissed it.

"Don't, Sammy-boy." She drew it away.

"God!" said Sam between his teeth, and again "God!"

The softened mood dropped from her again.

"Oh, say,—it ain't as bad as all that! . . . Oh, la—la,—give me a drink!"

The hollowness of her bravado stabbed straight at his heart.

"Look here," he said gripping her wrist, "you telling me the truth?"

Her eyes met his and dwelt there, their blueness beginning to tremble again. When she spoke it was hardly more than a whisper.

"What difference would it make—Sammy-boy?"

The moment plunged them into eons of time, their hearts, their bodies, their spirits rose to meet one another and clung together with fierce grappling clasps. Slowly their lips met; they were oblivious of the room, of the world; all could see and all could jeer if they were so minded.

"Come, let's get out of here." She stirred abruptly and half rose from her seat. Sam glanced round the table. Some of his friends had wandered away, others were engaged. Jack and Taylor were still arguing. He touched the former's arm.

"I'm going," he said. "Say good night to Matt for me. I'll be down to see you sometime to-morrow."

Jack swept him with a glance that included the girl and grinned. Sam could have struck him where he sat. He caught Evelyn's arm and together they weaved their way through the throng.

There was a hansom cab at the curb.

"Where to, sir?"

Anywhere! Everywhere! Drive to hell's or heaven's gates! What mattered it? Just to be alone,—just to be together,—just to have this frail, tender child with the straw-colored hair close to him, his arm about her. She pulled off her hat and sank against him, her head upon his breast and now and then he pressed his lips to her yellow locks and breathed deep of the faint odor that emanated from them.

It was June, the night was dank with hot-house breaths, the new foliage on the park trees hung limp and tropical, the sky through the leafy branches pressed close with murky stars. The beat of the horse's hoofs in front of them sounded solitary and hollow: clop—clop—clop, the animal's haunches moving rhythmically with his gait.

Oh, to drive forever thus! Oh, to drive on and on out of life and into eternity! Oh, that there might be no to-morrow—no thought of others—none but that of love!

§ 2

The morning sunshine edged the window-shade and the Holland curtain was greenishly alight. The room was shrouded in semi-darkness, but its disorder was apparent. Sam felt sick, his nerves shaken. He rose, swaying giddily on his feet a moment, and went to the window, hooked back the edge of the shade with a bent forefinger, and looked out upon sordid roof-tops flooded with glaring sunshine. Gently he raised the curtain, pushed the window higher, knelt down with his elbows on the ledge, and let what little freshness was in the morning air fan his throbbing head.

What time was it? He could only guess. Ten o'clock probably. Aunt Sarah and Ruth were getting ready for church; there had been a great to-do, no doubt, when it was discovered he had not come home. There would be explanations to face, lies told, feelings to be pacified. Distaste welled up strongly within him. The night he had just lived through unfolded painfully. Emotions, violent, conflicting, besieged him,—pity, loathing, anguish, and remorse. He bent his burning forehead against the palm of his hand and rocked gently from side to side, groaning through locked teeth.

A sigh came from the bed.

"Sammy-boy?"

"Yes, Ev'?"

"What you doing?"

"Just getting air. It's terrible in here."

"How you feel?"

"Rotten."

There was a short silence, then,—

"Come here, Sam."

He rose and went over to the bed to sit down upon its side.

The girl moved nearer to him and felt for his hand. He could just see her blue liquid eyes in their dark rings, and the mesh of straw-colored hair spread like a fan over the pillow. Her face was as white as the linen beneath it. They looked long at one another, searching each other's thoughts.

"Do you love me, Sammy-boy?"

A wave of tenderness burst over him. He gathered her in his arms.

"You bet I do," he said tensely. In that moment the loath-

ing of himself and her dissolved like vapor and in its place stood love, and he knew it for love. He lifted her close to him and kissed her lips passionately.

"Oh, God," he murmured between his kisses, "Oh, God,—Oh, God,—Oh, God!"

"What is it, Sammy-boy?"

He could not explain, but he sensed the fight that lay before him—his love and her against the world.

He laid her gently back on the pillow and bowed his head in his hands,—and thus they remained for a long time, her frail white fingers resting on his knee. He roused himself at length and expelled his breath on a great "Whew!" It was going to be a struggle—a terrible struggle.

His eyes traveled to her face and he found it glistening with tears.

"Ev'!" he exclaimed and took her in his arms again.

"Oh,—I know," she said wearily.

"I'll never give you up, never—never—never!"

He kissed her wet cheeks and wet eyes, and suddenly she clung to him, her thin white arms about his neck. Little whispering cries broke from her as Sam strained her to him, burying his face against her soft flesh.

"Come," she said with determination, pushing him from her, the blue eyes wide, freeing themselves from the dazzle of her tears, smiling a forced smile. "Come, I'll get breakfast for you; I can get a real good breakfast. Dais' and I have lots of fun over breakfast sometimes."

"Where's Daisy?"

"Oh, she's across the hall, and Myrtle Flynn and Kitty Dale live in this hotel, too. We often get together for breakfast,—all four of us."

"I don't feel much like eating."

"Well, you leave it to your little Ev'; coffee will brace you up like everything. . . . You wouldn't have a drink, would you? I got whiskey."

Sam shuddered.

She slipped into a kimono and went into the tiny bathroom where he could hear her striking matches and clattering tins. Painfully he struggled into his clothes. Half-dressed he sank into the one easy-chair and stared about the room. It was a cluttered little den with hardly passage space between the few pieces of furniture. The bureau was decked with ribbons,

souvenirs, theater-ticket stubs, photographs; on the walls were pinned art supplements from the newspapers, and there were one or two large framed pictures. Over the corner of one of these a dried branch of brittle dead leaves had been placed, and on the opposite wall a tennis racket hung suspended by ribbon bows. It might have been the room of a school-girl. Bolt upright on the seat of a straight-backed chair sat a battered rag doll, the markings of its face hardly discernible, but decked now with a bit of red silk tied bandit-fashion about its head and a broad ribbon of the same color about its middle.

"That's Mehitabel," Evelyn informed him coming into the room and noticing his interest. "I used to play with her when I was little and I just couldn't leave her behind when I left Grand Island. I tell her all my troubles,—don't I, Mehitabel?" She caught up the doll and kissed it. Sam took the dangling bundle from her and studied its faded-inked face, its lifeless eyes. Here in his hands was a mute witness that could tell him much! What scenes of depravity in that forlorn little bedroom had it not viewed with its senseless orbs? To what degradation and infamy had it not been privy? The mocking laughter of all his predecessors rang in his ears and the faded eyes of the thing he held sneered openly. He flung it from him with a groan and buried his face in his hands.

Evelyn produced a small folding table from a hidden place, spread it with a white cloth and arranged upon it knives, forks, spoons, and little fringed napkins. At one side she set a metal vase in which were stuck three paper roses. From the hallway at the bottom of her door, she brought in the Sunday paper and a small loaf of bread. Presently she set before him a steaming cup of coffee, sliced bread, butter, and a jar of jam; she made a similar array for herself, and drew up her chair to sit across the table from him. But Sam could touch nothing except the coffee. His spirit was sick within him; his misery of mind and heart rode him hard. He was anxious to be gone; but he could not tear himself from her side. The disordered room, the scattered clothing, the tumbled bed revolted him, yet the thought of her kisses, the smell of her hands and hair, the feel of her frail, slender body,—her tenderness, her dependency, held him captive.

The day called him; his home, his uncle, his aunt, beckoned; he must pick up the thread of existence again and face the world,—and life. Church, Dr. McIntosh, Mr. Wright, the

house on Sixteenth Street,—they were brass in his mouth! Even the thought of Jack and Matt and the others with their inferences and smiles repelled him. Inexorably the passing hours drew them nearer. The moment came when postponement of all the hideousness ahead could no longer be endured. He must confront it, accept the challenge. He must get away to think, to take stock of himself.

It was well into the afternoon before he quitted Evelyn, dragging her twining arms from about his neck and flinging himself out of the room, shutting the door that led to the silent corridor outside behind him with a jar. Down the unfamiliar stairs that wound about a narrow light-well he made his way, past the sodden-faced clerk at the desk, to the hot, burning, graceless street of the sordid neighborhood. Walk—walk—walk! He wanted to walk himself free of his burden and his thoughts; he wanted to recapture sanity again, to go back to the blessed peace-of-mind of yesterday.

But in his ears, pursuing him, rang the last cry of Evelyn as he quitted that room of horror:

"Oh, Sammy-boy, Sammy-boy,—you'll come back! *You* won't desert me! Promise me, Sammy-boy, promise me!"

The streets and the houses seemed unreal, the men and women he met lay figures, stuffed and puppet-like, dressed up in their Sunday best, the harsh, ugly sunshine beat upon him, merciless, cruel, malevolent. He thought of Uncle Cyrus, Aunt Sarah, and Ruth eating their heavy three-course dinner, his chair beside the table vacant,—or perhaps it was occupied by Stanford Marsh!

Mechanically his steps led him homeward. He found himself unexpectedly before the house! . . . He slipped his latch-key into the lock, noiselessly opened the hall door and closed it gently. It was after four, dinner was over, Meggs and Marty had gone out, the family was upstairs in the sitting-room. . . . What good did it do to be quiet? All were aware he had not come home last night; he cared nothing for what they thought of him. He opened the door behind him again, slammed it, and mounted the stairs with a heavy tread.

As he had expected, his aunt's white figure stood in the entrance of the sitting-room as he reached the upper floor.

"Why, Samuel! . . . Where have you been?" Her voice was shocked.

He gave her a level look.

"I didn't come home last night."

"Yes, I know, but where were you? What explanation have you to make?"

"None."

He tramped by her and up the stairs to his room.

There at last! He had been hungering for his room. Now he could think, now adjust himself.

But there was no adjustment for him or any rest. His thoughts went straight to Evelyn and centered there. The doubts of the morning, the speculations, fancies,—all the hideous questions he was to ask himself over and over for days to come, buzzed like stinging gnats within his brain. What was she? He told himself a brutal answer. What was her means of livelihood? The most despised trade in the world. He was one of tens, twenties,—hundreds, perhaps! Others had kissed her lips, had breathed hot breaths in her face, had held her in their arms, had fondled and caressed her. She had submitted to them all, inveigled them to her room, fooled them and hoodwinked them! . . . "Sammy-boy!" . . . He raged and writhed upon his bed.

It came to him he had paid her nothing for his entertainment! A dreadful thought! . . . Had she expected it? . . . Suddenly choking, panting, he scrambled to his feet, jerked open the battered valise where he kept his money and snatched the few bills from the old grease-stained wallet. He would send it to her,—send it to her that night,—every God damn cent he had! He was crying now, the hot tears pouring down his cheeks. He pinned a paper to the bills and wrote on it: "From your thoughtless Sammy-boy!" and put a row of exclamation marks after it. He stared at that, then fiercely scratched out the name; he was too miserable to think of a scathing substitute. His hands trembled as he reached for pen and envelope. He paused a moment as he realized he did not know her last name, but he knew Miss Dale's: "Miss Myrtle Dale." He put that on the envelope and in the corner: "For Evelyn," adding the name of the hotel. He sealed and stamped it, turned it face up and glared at it, and as he did so, there came to him the sound of her voice, her last words, and the vision of the pale, thin face, the liquid blue eyes in their dark circles, her look, her tenderness, her dependency, and he fell face down upon the table sobbing as though his heart would break.

There came a knock at the door; it opened at once and his uncle came in.

"Why, Sam—Sam,—what's the matter?"

The boy sprang to his feet, grasping a chair-back, glowering at his uncle under knit-brows, his teeth gripped.

"I'm afraid you've done something you're ashamed of, Sam," Uncle Cyrus said. "The mark of sin is in your face, your soul is stained with guilt. You didn't come home last night, you weren't present at family prayers this morning, you absented yourself from church. Now, Sam, this won't do. I have suspected for some time you have not been behaving yourself. You make no confidant out of either your aunt or me, you go your own way, you give no account of yourself. I can't permit this to go on, Sam. You make your home here in my house; you're my brother's only son; I feel responsible for you. Now, my boy, I want a clean breast of everything. Where were you last night? What is your explanation for not coming home?"

Sam's breast rose and fell, his breath snuffled in his nostrils.

"I was drunk," he said, a sob in his throat, and as he saw darkness gather in his uncle's face, he added:

"And I stayed with a woman!"

The man betrayed all the shock and horror for which his nephew hoped; before he could speak, Sam, trembling, stepped nearer.

"And I'm going to get out of your house—and get out of it *now!*"

He reached for his hat blindly, determined to gain the street and come for his things in the morning, but in that instant his uncle turned and locked the door behind him, put the key in his pocket. Then sinking upon his knees beside the bed with uplifted hands, he began to pray.

"O, merciful God, hear the earnest supplication of Thy servant for this poor wayward boy. Soften his hard heart, O God, let Thy divine light shine down upon his soul, open his eyes, show him the perils that beset his path. Almighty Father, harken, I beseech Thee! Save this poor sinner,—save him, O God, save him ere it be too late. Don't let the devil get him, God! Help me—give me strength—open his ears that he may hear—his eyes that he may see——"

Sam, stupefied, stood swaying on his feet gazing at the supplicating figure with its cadaverous face and thin, sparse hair. Suddenly, he began to laugh uproariously, violently,

holding his sides, shouting his mirth louder and louder to drown the pleading voice.

"—it's Thee's boy, I'm praying for, O God, dear old Thee's little boy,—little Sam, whom Thou hast entrusted to my care——"

Something cracked inside Sam; abruptly he was spent, broken, beaten. His raucous mirth strangled in his throat, and he fell across the bed, moaning and sobbing.

"—and comfort him, O God, reveal to him the mercy of Thy divine love; wash away his sin, cleanse his heart, and lead him to Thy altar a penitent sinner humbly seeking Thy forgiveness. . . ."

CHAPTER XI

§ 1

THUNDER had ruled the heavens all day. For forty-eight hours heat had lain in a steaming mist upon the city. The papers reported many prostrations, and thousands of people migrated to the beaches to spend the night on the cool fringe of the ocean. But in mid-morning of the third day black-plumed clouds, their outer edges white-tipped and billowing, had appeared in the northwest, and by noon a gale burst upon the streets, followed within a few ominous minutes by a torrential rain that washed them clean and brought panting relief to everyone. Through the blackness that had hung like an awful pall above the city and the deluging down-pour, lightning had forked a fiery way and the thunder-claps had crashed over the city in reverberating detonations.

Late in the afternoon the storm rolled itself away, and through the retreating masses of clouds the sun poured a flood of dazzling light upon the wet and dripping city. Everything was fresh and sparkling as Sam quit work and started for home. He decided to ride to-night for he was unusually tired. From the elevated train that bore him uptown, he noticed the wind had done considerable damage; signs were ripped off, awnings rent, terra-cotta chimneys down, and in two or three places trees had been torn up by their roots. He hoped Ev' had not been frightened.

In spite of his fatigue, he was particularly light-hearted this evening. The crowd of fellow-passengers who had left the train at the same time with him and were now descending the narrow iron stairs at Eighth Street, moved at a laggardly pace. He wanted to push them all flat and walk on their heads. When, at last, he was freed, he broke into a run, darting through the traffic, and was nearly knocked over by an express wagon. The driver swore at him, but Sam laughed back and waved his hand joyously.

It was Saturday night and the markets, groceries, and small shops were doing a brisk business for besides the ensuing Sunday, Monday was Labor Day and most of the stores would be closed. A holiday spirit prevailed; Sam felt it in the good-natured elbows that jostled him, in the rattling vehicles bound on their last deliveries, in the smiling Jew whose news-stand huddled beneath the elevated stairway. He stopped as he passed a busy poultry market; a row of picked fowls dangled scrawnily from hooks over the door,—a sign read: "Chickens —9 cts. per pound." It seemed cheap to Sam. His week's envelope was in his pocket, and he had planned to hand it to Ev' unopened as usual, but now he hesitated. It would be fun to carry home a chicken for her to roast on Sunday; it would be a surprise, and Ev' loved surprises. Still, for every cent of his wages, she had a definite use; it was a tight squeeze every week making ends meet. He sighed; he must deny himself this pleasure and every pleasure that cost money, if their adventure was to turn out successful, and it *must* be successful!

To think of her waiting for him was wonderful. Dear old Ev'! Dinner was always the event of the day for her; probably she had been fussing over it most of the afternoon. It was amazing what feats she could make that old three-burner gas stove perform with its battered oven attachment! . . . He had paid only three dollars for it!—a smart girl, Ev'! . . . And what fun they were having! His uncle and aunt could wring their hands and moan to their hearts' content. If living with Ev' was sin, then there wasn't any God, nor goodness, nor anything!

As he turned into Christopher Street, he whistled,—a shrill, piercing note between his teeth. The sound was not pretty, but she could hear it and it brought her always to the window, high up on the third floor. To-night he found her watching for him, sitting on the sill, her little figure a white spot in the red expanse of the building's brick façade. She waved a dish-rag at him,—he could just make out her smile.

Sometimes when he looked at Ev' and she did not know he was watching, his love would rise in him like a hot, scorching flame, and he would think he could never have loved her half so much if there had been no black, ugly past. He hated to think about that, he would not let himself think of it, but Ev' was what she was to-day because of him; he had saved her. If it hadn't been for him, hers would have been the "gas or

river" route! She was his; he had made her good! And their great love made life together beautiful.

He raced up the three flights of worn wooden stairway, his feet clattering and echoing in the bare halls. He remembered how this characteristic of the old barracks had impressed him on that night—it was three years ago!—when he had come to Jack's and Matt's room for the first time. He and Ev' had the same quarters now. A little more than a fortnight after the two young men had moved out, they had moved in. The rent of the place was but ten dollars a month; it was possible to keep house in it, and when the idea had come to him of taking it for Ev' and himself, Sam had jumped to the decision. It was a large room with a southern exposure, and beneath its two windows, down below, was a triangular patch of grass and trees. There was a hot-air register in one corner,—he never remembered the apartment being cold when Jack and Matt lived there,—a good-sized though windowless bathroom in the rear, and a practical fireplace, where often he had seen his friends burn rubbish.

As his noisy footsteps heralded him, Evelyn threw open the door and ran into his arms. They hugged one another, hungrily kissing.

"Ah, Sammy-boy,—I'm *so* glad you're home! I've missed you terribly to-day."

"And just think, Ev'—Sunday and Monday and no work!"

"You don't think I've forgotten, do you? Dais' was here this aft——"

Sam's face clouded.

"What's the matter?"

"I wish you wouldn't run 'round with that old crowd."

"But, Sammy, she came to see me. I couldn't be rude to her when she came here! . . . And she's an awful good friend. . . ."

"Well, you know what I mean."

She kissed him by way of answer and they shut the door behind them.

"I see you changed the bed around."

Evelyn had gone at once into the bathroom where the gas burner rested on a shelf in a small recess next the tub, and she called her answer from within.

"I thought it gave us more space that way. Don't make no diff', does it?"

Sam did not care. He considered Evelyn had displayed much cleverness in the way she had furnished and arranged their little one-room home. It had cost them less than a hundred dollars! Sam had had about forty dollars in the old grease-stained wallet and there was also the fifty he had borrowed from Taylor Evans when he had thought that sending Evelyn back to Grand Island was the best course for her—and for him. Accustomed as his eyes were to the higgledy-piggledy fashion in which Matt and Jack had lived, the present sweetness and orderliness under Evelyn's hand seemed positively miraculous. More than once on that never-to-be-forgotten afternoon when he and she had prowled through second-hand furniture stores and selected a bed, a wobbly old walnut chest of drawers, a table, chairs, a rug, a lamp, blankets, sheets, towels, and kitchen utensils, he had feared his emotion would get the better of him and tears would come. It had seemed to him such a tremendous thing that they were doing, and yet so simple. The furniture had been delivered, they had spent one late afternoon and evening pushing it into place, and the next day they had moved in. They had had to ask no one's leave; it had been entirely and delightfully their own business. Ev' had done wonders, Sam thought. She had made some white net curtains for the windows; she had placed the furniture attractively, and had taken a piece of ordinary stiff wrapping paper, stenciled and oiled it, and had turned out a first-class looking shade for the lamp!

He felt a bursting pride in his tiny home. That he could maintain it, that it was the work of his hands, or rather, the result of such work, was a never-ceasing marvel to him. He looked round now at its completeness and neatness with a wave of satisfaction.

He drew the Morris-chair, the one luxury they had permitted themselves, nearer the open window and sank gratefully into it, realizing again he was tired. But a great peace and contentment were upon him. The sun was sinking and in the sky, the lingering sentinels of the storm's rear-guard were like pillars of fire. A thousand jewels flashed from the glistening house-tops that still were wet. Below, the quaint little street thronged with life; he could hear the chip-chipping of hurrying feet, the rattle of wheels, the clatter of horses' hoofs. It was a sweet place; nowhere else that Sam knew, could he and Evelyn have found quarters so cheap and yet so pleasantly

situated. And they might have missed it,—the whole venture had depended upon chance circumstances and a hastily formed decision.

He fell to thinking of that first terrible week of irresolution when all his world had pulled one way, his love the other. At first he had considered his uncle, his aunt, Mr. Wright, and his friends, and had believed all they said to him, or rather what he knew they would have said to him had he discussed his problem with them. Only to Mr. Wright had he actually talked of it,—and later to Taylor Evans. Jack and Matt he had shunned. The latter had left for Europe within a day or two, Jack had departed westward, Morrisey had sailed south. He had seen none of them; he feared their jibes and jests, their ridicule. Jack, he had been certain, would have told him he was a fool. Possibly Vin might have understood; Taylor was sure he would.

For seven days and nights Sam had struggled desperately against the tug that drew him steadily back to Evelyn. He reminded himself over and over what she was, what her life had been; he tortured his brain with fearful visions, pictured horrors, hideous imaginings of her past; he beat his head, he beat his breast; it was of no avail. Her pale yellow hair, her yellow brows and lashes, her blue eyes in their hollow rings, her last despairing cry left him no peace. Against all the excellent reasons for abandoning her, was the incontrovertible, inflexible fact that he loved her. That was what these friends of his did not understand. He loved her! He did not care what she was nor what she had been,—he loved her!

Hopefully he had gone to Mr. Wright, confident he would get help and encouragement from this friend of young men, but Mr. Wright had been dishearteningly disapproving. He had shaken his head and told Sam he was handling pitch. No—no, there was no way out for him. Renunciation was his only course,—and renunciation, after all, was a beautiful thing, wasn't it? The girl was a passing fancy; Sam would soon get over his feeling for her; it was sex attraction, nothing more, very natural at his age, but something to be controlled; he must steel himself against such wanton pleasure, control carnal appetites. . . .

As Sam sat looking out of the open window dreamily watching the fading light, he wondered that he could have expected either assistance or understanding from Mr. Wright. There

had been a second interview between them when he had begged this same friend to lend him fifty dollars to send Evelyn back to her people in Grand Island. She was to go home, make her peace with her parents, clear up that unfortunate marriage, —and he, himself, was to work hard in New York and in six months or a year when he was earning enough to take care of her, she was to join him, they would be married and begin their life together in respectable fashion. But Mr. Wright had declined to lend him the money.

Despair had shut in upon him from every side; no one was willing to help him. He shook his head now as he recalled the wretchedness of those days and nights. He had not dared to trust himself to see Evelyn until within his hands he had the means to offer her the trip home. He had wanted to be good, as much as he had wanted her.

It was Taylor Evans who had cheerfully lent the money he so badly needed. On the following Sunday afternoon, Sam had sought out this friend in his diminutive bookshop, for it came to him that this tall, lumbering, uncouth fellow with the sleepy eye and deep, rumbling voice would understand. With passionate relief he had opened his heart and poured forth his story and his trouble. And Taylor had replied so readily and simply:

"Why, I'll lend you the fifty, Sam,—gladly."

That very night after the evening service at church, trembling, excited, his heart racing, Sam had gone to find her. At her hotel he asked for her, for Miss Flynn, Miss Dale,—the girl called Daisy. The sodden-faced clerk told him they all were out. He had gone to Molla's, but the dance-hall was deserted. A prey to disquieting thoughts, he retraced his steps, a half-mad determination in him to force an entrance to her room and satisfy his torturing jealousy, but at the very entrance to her hotel he encountered her along with Daisy.

He thrilled even now at the memory of that meeting. Her companion, at once, had disappeared, and she had flown straight into his arms. As he held her close, searching the depths of her blue eyes turned to his, he had realized that all he had been thinking of her and imagining of her was true: she *did* love him; no matter what she had been in the past, *now* she was good.

But for her to return to Grand Island was impossible. She explained the reasons as they sauntered along in the dim street

and hot night, arm in arm, his hand on hers. There were her father and her friends; she could never face them again as long as she lived; she had made a fool of herself and everybody in town knew it; her father, she was certain, would never forgive her; there were two younger sisters, it appeared, and the old man considered she had done them a great wrong.

"You see, Ev'," Sam argued, "we want to begin life right. We ought to get married and start in as man and wife. If you could only find out about that—that actor, I'd get a license double quick. . . . I just can't let you go on living the kind of life you've been doing. It's either it or me,—you got to choose. . . . Oh, Ev',—Ev',—I just can't let you go on that way!"

"No, no, Sammy-boy,—of course not. You don't think I want to, do you?"

"Ev', I'd kill you if I thought . . ."

"Oh, Sammy-boy,—if I had, you ought to!"

"I'm only getting fifteen a week. I don't see how we possibly can manage to live on that. . . ."

"I could work,—I could get a job . . ."

"You, a job! Why, Ev', you aren't strong enough to work! You'd just go to pieces; you couldn't stand it . . . You got to write to your father."

"It ain't any use, Sammy; I keep telling you."

"Well, you can write to him; you can see what he says."

But nothing could move her in this direction; she declined to have anything to do with Grand Island.

The week that followed had been almost as hard as the preceding one. Sam had met her every night, fleeing his home as soon as he had finished dinner. It was a hideous business sitting at table with his aunt, uncle, and Ruth, counting the minutes until he could rush from them to the arms that awaited him. Constraint had held them all. More than once, Sam had been uncomfortably conscious of Ruth's solemn regard. His prompt departure after the evening meal aroused his uncle's suspicions; a row between them had been trembling in the air.

The next Sunday, things culminated. During the morning service at church, Sam, sitting between Aunt Sarah and Ruth in his uncle's pew, had been thinking only of Evelyn and wishing that his one day of freedom might be spent with her instead of in this mummery of worship. Doctor McIntosh had shaken his leonine head, pounded his pulpit, and lifted his elo-

quent voice in behalf of missionary work. As he sat beneath the thunderous harangue, there flashed to Sam the thought of the room on Christopher Street. A moment or two of rapid calculation followed and a light that grew ever brighter and more radiant began to break through the gloom packed about him. It could be done! . . . It was possible! . . . If Ev' would try it, he would! . . . In any case, they had nothing to lose! . . .

"Give generously to this worthy cause, my brethren; it is not enough to worship God with song and thanksgiving. I tell you the Christian I have the greatest respect for, worships God with *dollars!* It is easy to come here in your best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and sing hosannas. It isn't that that counts with God Almighty. It's what you folks deny yourselves in clothes and pleasures and comforts, and that you bring here in the form of cash and put into that wooden plate when it is passed that is chalked up to your account in Heaven's books. Now we've had one collection, already, but I'm going to ask the Elders to go through the church again. I want to see how many 'dollar' Christians I have facing me this morning!"

Sam had made a swift reach for his hat, risen to his feet, slipped by his uncle's knees, and walked straight up the aisle and out of the church. Once in the street he had broken into a run. What remained for him to do, had to be done quickly, before his aunt marched into the house at the end of the service. He dashed along the pavements, darted around corners, cut across streets, his heart singing, his pulses throbbing. He was free—free—free! Up the stairs he bounded, and in less than ten minutes had crammed the old battered valises full of his clothes and had wrapped the rest of his effects into bulky newspaper bundles. After a bumpy, clumsy descent to the parlor floor, he placed his latch-key in a conspicuous place on the hat-rack, and with another glance at his watch to assure himself he had still a margin of a few minutes, quitted the house. A bag grasped in either hand, an untidily wrapped bundle beneath each arm, he crossed to the Westminster Hotel, less than a block away, and left his load in charge of the porter. Then he had flown like the liberated bird he felt himself to be, straight to his girl.

Two days later Mr. Wright appeared at the closing hour at Hartshone & Faber's to reason with him. Sam was acting

in a mad fashion, he said. His uncle and aunt were grievously disappointed in him; he was using them most unkindly after all their generous treatment in providing a home for him, and in doing all they had done for him; the life he proposed to live with this woman of the streets was a life of sin and shame, it was in defiance of probity, the rules of society, the laws of civilization, and he was bound to pay a heavy reckoning.

"Sam, Sam," Mr. Wright had earnestly pleaded, "you'll regret this step. You're handling pitch and you are bound to be defiled. It can't be done, my boy. Check yourself before it is too late, rein in this mad steed of passion that is carrying you straight to perdition. Ah, Sam, it isn't too late now to say you're sorry. Come home with me, my boy, and tell your good uncle and aunt so; I know they'll forgive you, and we'll have a quiet little talk with Dr. McIntosh, and he'll help you make your peace with God; all will be forgiven and forgotten. 'Though your sins be as scarlet,—they shall be as white as snow.' Wonderful words, Sam,—wonderful, don't you think?"

Sam had listened silently. There was no sense in saying harsh things; he would be with Evelyn in half an hour, and on the morrow they would be living together in the Christopher Street room. So he thanked Mr. Wright and turned away, perhaps abruptly. As he walked away, he heard the man heave a heavy sigh and knew had he looked back, he would have seen him shaking his head slowly and sadly.

They criticized him, of course, Sam said to himself as, musing, he watched the last of the departing sunlight. They criticized him, and mourned him. Mr. Wright and his uncle frowned and made tut-tutting noises with their tongues at the mention of his name; no doubt they prayed for him! Aunt Sarah probably lifted her hands to heaven and called everyone to witness she had tried her best to be a mother to him. Ruth. . . . He stopped a moment when he thought of Ruth. Of course, she condemned him, too; she would take her opinion of him from the others. It was too bad. Some day when he had married Ev' and was rich and prosperous, she would view the matter in a different light.

A week or ten days later, he had Narcissa's letter. If he had begun to hate his uncle before, he hated him ten times more after that letter reached him. She had written, naturally as his uncle had meant her to, as no doubt he had suggested. Uncle Cyrus's communication had greatly distressed and

wounded her. She, too, judged her brother harshly. Sam could not find it in his heart to blame her, but the letter hurt him sorely and he had torn it into tiny fragments, and sent no reply. Narcissa, like Ruth, would have to wait to see what the years unfolded.

"Sammy-boy, dinner! Sorry, dear, to keep you waiting. . . . What are you so silent about, sitting all hunched down that way and staring out of the window?"

"Oh, just dreaming."

"Sammy, you're not sorry about anything?—about me? You're not sorry you did this?"

"No, dearest, I'm not. . . . I thank God every day that I had the courage to take you." He pulled himself up by the broad arms of the chair and rose to his feet. "Only, Ev' . . ."

"What is it, Sammy-boy?"

"I wish . . ."

"What?"

"Oh, I wish we could go and get married and shut their damn mouths."

"Whose mouths?"

"My folks' and—everybody's."

She looked up into his face, studying it as he stood gazing intently through the window at the vista of the city; then she shrugged her thin shoulders and, reaching on tip-toe, kissed him.

"Oh, what's the diff'," she said, and led him to the table.

§ 2

The meal consisted of stewed tomatoes, "quick" biscuits that were rather heavy and had refused to brown, meat cakes, an apple pastry that had come from the bakery, and iced tea. Evelyn had made the tea earlier in the day and it had cooled in a glass fruit jar on the window-sill since morning. Half-an-hour before Sam arrived home, she had gone down to the dairy on the corner and brought home a small pitcher of cream and a lump of ice wrapped in newspaper. The cream was for Sunday morning breakfast. Usually they flavored their coffee from a can of condensed milk, but on the day Sam did not have to hurry off to work, breakfast was a spe-

cial event and there were always extra things to eat. Part of the ice had gone into the tea and a sliced lemon had been added, but the concoction had not been successful; there was a strong taste of tannic acid in the beverage and neither more sugar nor further diluting improved it.

"I don't see what on earth's the matter," Evelyn kept muttering, stirring her tea and continuing to taste it.

Sam was not concerned. Sitting there at their own dinner table, intimately, with this dear companion who had labored so hard and earnestly for his comfort, was enough for him. He was hungry, tired, the food tasted good and there was plenty. He looked at her fondly, caught her by the wrist and kissed her bare arm just below the elbow.

"Oh, Ev',—you're a wonder. I don't mind about the tea; all I want is just to have you." He pulled her towards him and their lips met.

"But, I don't understand it. Dais' used to make marvelous iced tea."

"Oh well, bother the tea and bother Daisy, too. . . . D'you think you ought to keep up that connection?"

"Don't fuss, Sammy-boy. It's too hot to find fault. That old bathroom hasn't got a particle of ventilation in it, and when all three of the gas burners are going, it gets so hot in there that I'm afraid sometimes I'm going to keel over."

"I'm sorry. I wish we could manage to go round to Galupi's oftener. . . . We can to-morrow night, can't we?"

"Yes; but if you think it's an easy job feeding us both on the little money I have, I c'n tell you it ain't!"

"Lord, I know it, Ev'. And I was thinking only to-day, we ought to begin to save. There's that fifty we owe Taylor, and I simply must begin to pay him something on account pretty soon."

"He ain't got anybody to look after. Won't hurt him to wait awhile."

"Yes, I know, but we'll have to start in putting something aside toward paying him off."

"When do you think they'll raise you again?"

"I hope in January; Jerry Haines promised he'd see what he could do for me after the first of the year."

"It's mighty hard; I don't see how we're going to make out."

"Don't say that, Ev',—you mustn't say that! Isn't it

worth starving along here for a year or two to get out of the old life, and isn't it worth any kind of sacrifice to be together?"

"Yes,—yes, you're right, Sammy-boy; you're always right. . . . But you know I'd just love to cook you a real good little dinner sometime. I can make wonderful creamed mushrooms and oyster poulette,—an' I just wish we could have a bottle of claret once in a while or a drink of something to cheer you up! You look so tired, Sammy-boy, when you come home!"

"I don't feel tired when I have you to come home to."

She slid into his lap and nestled against him. The remnants of the dinner lay upon the table before them, the plates soiled, the cloth crumby; the one gas jet above their heads flared and shrilled a thin minor note, and the evening outside was like a Japanese print of cool gray shadows, its darkest shades checkered with squares of light, its paler tints pricked with points of bright stars. A hubbub of small noises rose from the street below and beat upon the night, broken now and then by distinguishable sounds.

"Happy, Ev'?"

"Oh yes,—very happy, Sammy-boy. You don't know what a comfort it is to have you. I used to think there wasn't any more happiness in the world for me. . . . You're so good, Sammy."

"No, I'm not good, Ev',—but I love you."

"Do you, Sam? Are you *sure* you love me?"

His answer satisfied her and she wriggled closer in his arms.

There was a comfortable silence between them. Then Sam asked:

"What was that fellow's name, Ev',—that actor?"

She waited a long moment before replying and he felt her draw a deep breath.

"Montgomery,—Austin Montgomery. That was his stage name; his real name was Edgar Plötz."

"Tell me about him."

"There ain't much to tell; he treated me like a dog, that's all."

"Well, how? Tell me about it."

She sighed a little wearily.

"Oh, he came to Grand Island with a show. He was from New York, but I think the company was got together in Chicago. They intended to play at Grand Island only a couple of nights and I guess they didn't do much business. Anyhow

the manager flew the coop and left them high and dry. Austin hung round there for about three weeks waiting for money to take him back to New York. I met him. He was staying at the hotel and I used to go down there at night to see a girl friend of mine who kept the magazine and cigar stand. . . . I was crazy about him; I thought there was nobody in the world like him. It seemed to me I'd kill myself if he went off and left me in Grand Island. I hated it at home; my sisters were mean to me and our stepmother was lots nicer to them. When he was about ready to go away, he asked me if I'd go with him; I said I would if he'd promise to marry me as soon as we got to Chicago. He did all right, and I thought straight enough I was his wife. Then he brought me to New York. . . ."

"And then?"

"Oh, then it was a lot of things. We went to a boarding-house and after a while, he started in not coming home nights. Sometimes I wouldn't see him for days. He was drinking a good deal, and I guess there were other women. I don't know; he never told me. I used to cry and cry and cry. He wouldn't give me any money and he was sour and cross and mean. Oh, I led a dog's life those days! If he did come home, it was usually to sleep off a jag and get me to take care of him. One day I said I was going to get a divorce and make him pay me alimony, and he laughed at me and told me he had two other wives who had been trying to do that for years! I wouldn't believe him, and then he showed me some letters to prove it. . . . Oh, he was mean! . . ."

Sam tightened his grip about her and pressed her hair hard with his lips.

The story continued, a sorry tale of brutality and vice, of neglect and cruelty. There had been two years of it. Not once during that time did the man to whom she had entrusted herself do a day's work, or, as far as she knew, set foot upon a stage. He was a handsome man, Evelyn said, romantic-looking, and at one time, years before, a popular matinee idol. In various ways, she began to hear of a wealthy woman who took an interest in him. She was a silly creature twice Austin's age, a widow with a fortune. Evelyn came to understand at last that it was from this source that the money, which he never seemed to be without, was derived. There was another man in the boarding-house who was kind to her. He was an

actor, too. The place was an actors' boarding-house. Austin came home one day half-drunk and accused her of being too friendly with this man. They had had a terrible scene and the landlady had told them they would have to leave. They had packed their belongings the next day and Austin had sent his own trunk to one address, hers to another, and had told her he would meet her at the latter place at the end of the day. She never saw him again. Sometime after, she learned he had left town and had gone to Atlantic City with the rich widow. She had been stranded without a penny in the world. The only friend to whom she could turn was the actor who had been kind to her.

Sam listened for a little time longer, then suddenly, roughly, he clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Stop!" he cried. "I just can't bear it! . . . Oh, my God!"

Evelyn struggled from his clasp, and sat up, startled, angry, her eyes watering.

"You hurt me! . . . Oh, you *hurt* me!"

She freed herself from his detaining hands, and rose to her feet, her chin quivering, red in her pale cheeks, tears brimming her eyes.

"Ev'—I'm sorry. Oh, Ev',—I'm awfully sorry."

She seemed to struggle for self-control, half inclined to turn on him in fury, hesitating between that and surrendering herself to her grief. Then like a child, her face puckered and she gave way to sobs, sinking down beside the bed, her face in her hands.

Sam made no move. He sat where he was, his jaw and fingers clenched. Upon him, out of the past, swooped a flock of mocking, jeering, specters, and as he stared grimly at the huddled figure by the bed, he knew their laughter would be with him always. There it was,—the black chapter of horrors in her life from the shadow of which he never could be free. . . . Well, it wasn't her fault. . . Or was it? . . . No, by God, it *wasn't*, it couldn't be! A frail, little girl like that, struggling for life, for the mere privilege of living! . . . He didn't care what she'd done; he *mustn't* care!

"Ev'!" He rose and went to her.

"Ev'!" But she was not to be comforted. She sobbed passionately, crouching low, a pitiful figure by the bed. He sank upon his knees beside her and tried to put his arms about her. It was a long time before he could make her listen.

§ 3

An hour later they were happily and busily washing up the dishes. Evelyn had forgotten to put the kettle on the gas stove before they sat down and the water from the tap in the bathtub was lukewarm, but Sam scrubbed vigorously, a towel tucked into his belt to protect his trousers. Every once in a while, with hands a-drip, he must interrupt his work to kiss her.

"Oh, Sammy-boy," she would protest half laughing; "go on with what you're doing! You don't have to kiss me *all* the time!"

"But I love you so, Ev'," he would defend himself.

"I never saw a man like you!"

A faint echo of the specters' laugh again! She had known many men, of course; she could speak with authority! . . . But he must school his mind to shut out these dreadful thoughts; he must never think them. He returned to his dish-washing with determination.

By nine o'clock, the apartment was in order, the dishes and saucepans scrubbed and put away, the room itself set to rights; Evelyn with brush and newspaper swept up the sprinkling of crumbs upon the floor to shake them out of the window.

"There," she said dusting her hands, closing the bathroom door behind her, and surveying the ship-shape room with satisfaction, "now, we're done."

She went to the lamp, lighted it, set it on the center table and stood on a chair to turn out the gas. Sam was examining a magazine he had found at the office. He chuckled over some of the jokes he had discovered among the advertising pages. Evelyn looked about the room once more searching for something that still needed attention. Mehitabel had toppled over to one side on the marble mantel. She straightened the doll and then went to stand by the open window, her fingers resting on the raised sash above her head, her forehead against her arm. Down in the street three stories below, life still moved, children ran about in the dusk, white figures grouped themselves on door-stoops; in the direction of Sixth Avenue there was a blaze of yellow light from shop windows, the uncertain silhouette of a shifting crowd, and the clang of street car bells, their flickering lights and trundling

bumping as they rocked and jolted past the crossing. Behind her, Sam laughed comfortably over the magazine jokes.

He heard her sigh, but his mind was occupied and he made no move. A second long breath brought him promptly to his feet and beside her at the window.

"What is it, darling?" He was all solicitude, now.

A third time she sighed deeply and leaned a little wearily against him. He repeated his question.

"Nothing." He felt a faint shrug of her shoulder; he insisted she tell him what troubled her.

"Oh—it's Saturday night; I suppose that's the matter. . . . I was thinking about the people you don't like me to think about, Sammy-boy," she confessed turning up a penitent smiling face to placate him. "I've some awful good friends uptown and we used to have some awful good times. Dais' was always such a good sport and she used to make us laugh so. We were just silly, you know, Sammy-boy,—like girls are when they get together. . . . I remember one night when we were all at Molla's—Lord, we used to have fun at Molla's sometimes!—she started cutting up and pretended she was French and didn't understand a word of English. We got laughing so, I thought I'd die. . . . I kind of miss the laughing, Sammy; I guess that's what's the matter with me. . . ."

"Well, do you want to go back?" he asked sternly.

"Oh, no—no, Sammy-boy! You're being naughty, now. Of course, I don't want to go back. I love you and I love being here with you,—and I know it's the last chance I'll ever get to be respectable. . . . But, oh Sam, can't you understand that sometimes I wish I could see Dais' and Myrtle and all the girls again? We used to have such fun together, and oh, the stories we'd have to tell each other when we'd meet! I know what the 'bright lights' mean; I know as well as anyone; I've had my good look at them,—and I don't want ever to see them again,—but I *do* miss the girls, Sammy; we were all such good pals."

He told himself he must be tolerant, must be patient; it was a drab existence into which he had led her, and too much was not to be expected of her at once. He regretted the casualness of his hold upon her; he wished he could make her his wife; she would leave him some day, maybe, and go back to those laughing friends of hers and be reconciled to the "bright lights." He caught her fiercely in his arms and

swung her round so that she lay in them, her face below his.

"You wouldn't quit me, would you, Ev'?" he demanded through his teeth. "By God, if I thought you would, I'd strangle you! I'm going to make you my wife as soon as I can, and then you're going to be mine—mine—mine! Nobody's ever going to take you from me. D'you understand that?"

She smiled up at him, amused and pleased.

"I'm not going to quit you, Sammy-boy," she said tenderly. "I wouldn't give a bit of your finger nail for that whole bunch up there. I'm just yours, Sammy, and I'll always be yours."

He sank his lips into her neck and strained her to him fiercely.

"Oh, Sammy-boy, don't—don't—*don't!*" She struck him with her small fists to make him loosen his grip. "You don't know how strong you are," she panted when he had released her. "You—you're liable to hurt me sometimes with one of those bear hugs! You got a giant's strength, d'you know that?"

Smiling lovingly upon her, he did not answer. She twined her thin white arms about his neck.

"I love you for being so strong, Sammy-boy," she whispered; "you're as hard as marble."

She drew his head down to hers, his mouth to her lips, and they kissed for a long moment.

§ 4

The world was resplendent with warm, beautiful sunlight when Sam opened his eyes the next morning. His first sensation was that he had overslept and would be late at his work, the next the delightful realization it was Sunday and the whole day lay before him,—and the morrow, too. Evelyn was still asleep, her head with its tumbled mass of pale hair resting on his shoulder, her slim body fitted into the circle of his arm. She always slept so, her little hands curled like leaves upon his chest. All night long they had not moved from this posture. Glancing down, he could see her corn-colored brows, the fringe of her yellow lashes, the tip of her nose and chin. His love welled up in him, and gently, so as not to disturb her, he pressed his lips to her hair.

He lay then for almost an hour, his free forearm tucked beneath his head, reviewing their talk the night before, thinking of himself, of her, of their life and problem together. It was not going to be an easy problem for them! It would require courage and fortitude to win through to success. They must build something real and permanent out of their union, and to accomplish this, she must be willing to give up the old friends and associates, and accept, for the time being, the makeshift of a home he was able to provide. Someway he must make more money. His thoughts drew him to his work and to a consideration of his prospects in connection with it. Jerry Haines was his friend, and he believed Mr. Faber had a good opinion of him. He had asked Haines about a raise, but his superior had wagged a dubious head. He didn't see how he could do anything for Sam right away, he said; perhaps in January he could send in a recommendation for an increase, but Mr. Hartshone had been grumbling of late about the cost of operation. Sam felt that eventually he must switch into some other department of the business,—into a new branch of activity where determination and dogged perseverance would count. . . . And he and Evelyn must marry. Montgomery, or Plötz, must be located and the question settled whether he had or had not previously been married. He wondered about the law and it occurred to him that Ritter might be of help. Yet he shrank from appealing to Ritter. He knew well what that young man's opinion of Evelyn would be. To himself she was his wife,—in his own sight and, he believed, in God's, —but he longed for the legal tie that would bind him irrevocably to her.

She stirred, now, and murmured sleepily. Cautiously he disengaged his arm and slipped from the bed, adjusting the covers once more over her shoulders as she settled her head in the pillow. The morning was glorious. He stopped at the window and looked out upon the sun-flooded street below. There was a Sabbath stillness abroad and church bells in the neighborhood were ringing. His heart expanded with joy at the bright day with its freedom from work and its prospect of uninterrupted companionship with the girl he loved. In the bathroom, he lit the burner under the kettle, turned on the faucet whose slow trickle would eventually fill the tub, and began to shave.

Presently, yawning, blinking, and drawing the folds of her

thin night-dress about her, Evelyn came to the door to peer in upon him.

"Hello, darling." Her voice had the drowsy accents of a sleepy child.

"Hello, Ev'! . . . Golly, you scared me! . . . You nearly made me cut myself. I didn't hear you; the water was running."

"What time is it?"

Before answering her, he pursed his lips for her kiss so that she might not be daubed with the lather upon his face.

" 'Bout ten. You go back to bed till I get through in here. You aren't supposed to get up for an hour yet."

"Oh, but I've got breakfast to get, Sammy-boy,—eggs and everything this morning!"

"Make it an early lunch."

"Well—l." She stretched her small body, luxuriously, scratching herself with the folds of her thin night-dress, and curled up in the Morris-chair. They called back and forth to one another through the open door.

It was a happy time for both. Leisurely they proceeded from one trivial duty to another, stopping every few minutes for long earnest conversations or for caresses. After a while, they fell to skylarking: Evelyn threw a half cup of water at Sam, and when she had locked him in the bathroom, he retaliated by filling his mouth from the faucet and squirting the water through the keyhole, drenching her nightgown. Gales of merriment shook them, Sam laughed until helpless tears stood in his eyes, Evelyn was convulsed almost into spasms. It was after twelve before definite preparations for a meal were under way and one o'clock before they sat down to table. The repast when it finally appeared was epicurean, Sam declared. She brought him poached eggs and bacon, buns from the bakery, and coffee with real cream; he had three cups of it, the best, he asserted with vehemence, he had ever tasted in his life.

"Isn't this wonderful, Ev'?" Impulsively he reached out his hand to her. She put her frail fingers into it, and looked back at him, her eyes deepening into darker blue in their strange and moving way.

"Wonderful," she repeated softly.

"Did you ever think you'd be so happy?"

"Never."

"Did you ever believe there could be such happiness in the world?"

She shook her head, tears filming her vision.

"Ah, you darling!" He slipped to his knees beside her and gathered her in his arms, kissing her hair, her cheek and neck.

An hour later, after they had set their little home to rights, they sallied forth into the street, made their way across to Fifth Avenue, and turned north. The Sunday parade was just beginning to form and soon they were a part of it.

§ 5

That evening Taylor Evans dined with them at Galupi's. It had been a sudden inspiration of Sam's to invite him. Evelyn had warmly approved the idea. She declared that somehow she would save the expense out of the following week's market money. They descended upon him in his booky, crowded den at tea-time, and after lingering an hour there over his hospitality, carried him off with them for dinner. The meal in Galupi's was a great success. They stuffed on spaghetti and roast chicken, and dawdled over fruit, black coffee, and nuts until after ten. Taylor was in a delightful mood, interesting, discursive, entertaining. When the wine was served, he filled his glass and raised it first to Evelyn and then to Sam.

"To the bride and groom," he proposed and drained it with gusto.

CHAPTER XII

§ 1

"Ev',—where did you get the coat?"

"Dais' gave it to me. It's an old one of hers."

"I thought you weren't going to see any more of that girl."

Silence.

"Now, look here, Ev', that won't do."

"Sammy, I can't help it. Dais' is the best friend I got, and I ain't going to throw her down. She offered me the coat and I just took it; I tell you I'm cold these days and winter's coming on and everything! Sammy, I haven't had a new garment,—not a pair of stockings or gloves since last June!"

"I give you every cent I get, Ev'. Last week I spent twenty-five cents on myself."

"Well, it ain't enough."

"Oh God, don't I know it, Ev'!"

"I think you ought to get another job."

"Aw, come off! Where could I get one that would pay me more than fifteen per?"

"I don't know; others do it. Dais's got a rich fellow looking after her now."

"Oh, is that it!"

Silence again.

"Sammy-boy,—don't look so cross."

"Don't 'Sammy-boy' me!"

"Well, if you won't be reasonable, you can go to the devil."

He took a quick step toward her and caught her wrist.

"You mustn't say things like that to me, Ev'. I've given up everything I had in the world for you; I'm working as hard as I know how; I give you every nickel I make. That was my bargain,—you stick to yours."

"Well, why ain't I?"

"Because you're not. You keep going round with Daisy and that old gang."

"Sammy, you're asking me more'n I can do. Dais' is an awful good friend and I love her and I like Myrtle, too. I ain't got anything else to do. You don't realize what a dreary old sort of life I'm living. I adore you, Sammy-boy,—but we never have a cent to spend on any fun. We stay home night after night; I ain't been inside a theater *once* since I came here. I'm true to you, Sammy-boy—true as true can be,—but I got to have a little fun once in a while. You're away at your work all day and I get my own lunch here all by myself and then sit still the whole afternoon trying to read the paper or trying to make over an old skirt or waist or something. I love to go and have lunch with Dais', now and then, and go off shopping with her. She spends the money,—I don't. I can't see as there's any harm in that. . . ."

"But you just told me a fellow is keeping her!"

"Well, that ain't any different from me!"

Sam staggered under the blow. There was nothing to answer to that. He dropped into the Morris-chair and covered his face in his hands.

After a few minutes, she perched herself on the arm beside him and cradled his head in her arms, her cheek against his hair.

"Oh, you mustn't take on so, Sammy dear. It's all right for me to go and see Dais'. I got to have some life, Sammy-boy; I got to have some amusement. Don't think I love you one tiny bit less."

He caught her in his arms and pulled her to him.

"You swear you love me?"

"I swear it."

"As much as ever?"

"More,—a lot more. You're the best man I ever knew, Sammy."

He kissed her savagely and she lay for a long time, happy and contented in his arms, her head upon his shoulder while, moody and frowning, he gazed straight before him.

§ 2

Life presented a bleak outlook. The most rigid economy permitted only a bare existence,—nothing more. Evelyn needed clothes badly, Sam even more so. They owed a few

small bills in the neighborhood; the possibility of paying these off and of beginning to put something by for the necessities which inevitably they must have, seemed further and further remote.

Money—money—money! It all depended upon money. If only he were in a position to command a little wealth, Sam used to think, how easy it would be for them, how smooth their path! He could make Evelyn comfortable, give her the amusement she craved, the pretty clothes she needed, above all, he could take steps to have the illegality of her marriage established, and make her his wife. Their love was beautiful, ideal; it only needed money to have it endure and blossom into something admirable. He pinned his hopes on the "raise" Jerry Haines had promised him after the first of the year.

He came home one evening late in October to find Evelyn discouraged, and headachy. She was half-undressed and lying on the bed, the comforter pulled up over her, and nothing started in the way of dinner. There were traces of tears in her eyes. She only clung to him hungrily when he put his arms about her and begged her to tell him what the trouble was. For a long time, he had to coax.

"Oh, I just feel rotten; I guess that's all the matter with me; it don't make no diff'," she kept repeating.

But he knew there was something else.

"What's the use!" she said petulantly after a while; "it will only make you mad. You can't help it, Sammy-boy."

"Well, come on, tell me; what's gone wrong?"

"The girls are all going to an artists' ball to-night. It's a masquerade and they were getting ready for it while I was up there to-day."

Sam's jaw tightened slowly and his loving look departed.

"You kept at me and at me—and now you know!" cried Evelyn. She pushed him from her and raised herself on one elbow. "Now look here, Sammy, I just want to tell you something. You shan't take that high-and-mighty tone with me! I ain't going to the ball,—I'm sticking right here at home with you,—but I don't see why I ought to be ashamed to say I *want* to go. I ain't blaming you for not having the price, but I do blame you a lot for being so sour with me for wanting to go!"

He made no answer; she was right, of course. But the injustice of life which did not permit him to gratify her wish

rode him hard. He sat scowling on the side of the bed, his hands clasped between his knees, and Evelyn, believing him disapproving, continued her reproaches.

"And I've cried myself into a sick headache," she finished, fresh tears beginning to flow, "and now it's ten times worse. If you want any dinner you can get it yourself." She dropped back on the pillow and gave herself up to whimpers.

For half-an-hour and more, he sat still, gazing with unseeing eyes at a spot on the floor, his thoughts dark and brooding. Evelyn's sniffling stopped after a while, and there was utter stillness in the room. With a long breath and sigh that voiced the weariness of his soul, he roused himself eventually, and set about getting dinner.

§ 3

A fortnight later when he arrived from work, she met him in the gayest of spirits. She wore a new blue waist which she told him she had made herself from the lining of an old cloak. Sam doubted the statement, but he pretended belief and was full of praise. It was indeed becoming, and she had her hair arranged in a new way that he conceded was effective. She had taken special pains with the dinner and the room was rich with the appetizing smell of something roasting. He was bewildered by her high spirits.

"Sammy-boy, will you do Ev' a favor?" She had her arms about his neck and her blue eyes in their dark rings were singularly appealing. "You must promise me, now, before you sit down," she insisted.

"Why, what is it, darling?"

"No, you must promise me!"

"Very well, I promise."

She kissed him and pointed to the table set for dinner in the middle of which stood a bottle of wine.

"Where did you get it?" He picked it up and examined the label.

"Now, you mustn't ask. You promised me, Sammy-boy."

"I didn't promise I wouldn't ask, did I?"

"Well,—Dais' had some given to her and she made me bring a bottle home with me."

Sam eyed her with a reluctant smile. Her eagerness for

his approval emphasized the little-girl quality about her he always found appealing.

"What is it you want me to do?"

"Drink it with your dinner,—that's all. I didn't want you to be cross with me for bringing it home, and refuse to touch it."

He shrugged in compliance and met her grateful lips with his own.

Her flutter of excitement continued as she busied herself in her inadequate kitchen with the final touches to her preparations. She made him sit down at the table and close his eyes while she set the dishes before him; when everything was complete, she bade him open them. A roast chicken crisply brown lay before him and beside it a cup of smoking gravy. Sam widened his eyes in surprise and pleasure. She clapped her hands, glowing with enjoyment.

"I don't know how good it is!" she exclaimed. "The man said it was a good one and I've basted it and basted it every five minutes until my arm ached. I had the greatest time, Sammy-boy, to get a pan to fit the oven. This morning I discovered one on Eighth Street that was just the width but it was too long, but I bought it and I got the janitor to take off two inches and solder it together again. . . . Is it too dry?" she broke off to ask.

The bird seemed perfection and he was extravagant with the praise he knew meant so much to her. There were Saratoga chips from the grocery, and macaroni and cheese of which he was especially fond.

"Why, Ev'—Ev', you outdid yourself to-night! What is it? An anniversary or something I've forgotten?" He suspected there was a reason for the unwarranted effort, especially when she kept filling his wine glass. She amused him with her simple artifices. She even brought his pipe, filled it prettily for him and held the match.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded good-naturedly when the dinner was over and she came to sit on the arm of his chair. He realized she had been successful in bringing about in him the contentment and satisfaction she had intended; he felt replete, happy, at peace with the world.

It suited her to pretend innocence.

"Oh, come off now, Ev', there's some wicked plot afoot; what is it?"

"I just felt like getting you a nice dinner, that's all. Honest, Sammy-boy,—honest to goodness."

He smiled up at her; he was not convinced.

"I thought maybe you'd like going somewhere afterwards," she observed.

"Well, where? Where would you like to go, or what would you like to do that we can afford to do?"

She hesitated, then suddenly wriggled herself into his lap and poured forth her petition. 'Dutch' Koenig—Dais's friend,—was giving a party at Molla's after the theater and both 'Dutch' and Dais' had urged her to bring Sam and join them.

The warmth about Sam's heart slowly evaporated and gave place to a hard packing of ice. So that was it,—that was the explanation of the wine and the good dinner, the affection and high spirits! He groaned. She was such a child; she couldn't understand. He began to reason carefully and amiably, but she hid her face in his neck and every once in a while he would feel a rebellious shake of her yellow head when some of his words stirred her. Presently she sat up and faced him, her blue eyes glistening with tears and impatience.

"I don't see how you can be so mean, Sammy. I give up everything, all my friends and good times,—clothes, pleasures, theaters, *everything*,—yet you refuse to go with me to a little supper at a restaurant to which we're invited!"

"It's the kind of a restaurant that Molla's is," he argued. "It's the place of places where you should never be seen,—and you ought never to have a thing to do with that old crowd."

"But I haven't!"

"You've been running 'round with Dais' and now you speak with familiarity of 'Dutch' Koenig,—a person I never heard of before,—who I gather is paying Daisy's bills, and whom you evidently have met and know since you say he invited you to his party this evening and urged you to bring me."

"Now listen, Sammy-boy,—don't you think it would be lots of fun to go up there 'bout midnight and have something nice to eat and drink, sit and watch the crowd, and maybe you and I have a dance together? I can show you how to dance right here in half-an-hour before we go. Remember, Sammy-boy, it's the place you and I met each other!"

Sam shook his head, his lips firmly pressed into a thin line.

"But *listen*, Sammy,—you'll be reasonable about this, won't

you? You'll be kind to Ev'? What's the diff' if you and I go up there just once? We ain't been near the place for six months, and I don't see for the life of me what harm there'd be if we just dropped in there for a little while tonight."

"You and I don't belong in that crowd any more, Ev'. We're trying to live decently. It would be the beginning of the end for us."

"*Why* would it? It's a chance for a little fun and it won't cost us a cent."

"That isn't the point, Ev'; I wouldn't go up there if we had fifty thousand dollars."

"But, Sammy, won't you do it just this once to please Ev'? Won't you let Ev' have a little fun?"

"No, I can't. It's no place for you. I tell you we don't belong in that crowd any more. You're my wife, Ev',—just the same as my wife,—and a good man doesn't take his wife to places like Molla's."

She eyed him, exasperation and anger struggling through her tears.

"Oh, you're so *mean!*"

"I can't help it, Ev'."

"Yes, you can help it, too. You just won't go because you're an obstinate fool!"

"Ev'! . . . Ev'!"

"I don't care; that's just what you are! You don't know how to treat a woman. You think she can stick with a man day in and day out and never have a speck of fun? . . . Sammy-boy, listen . . ."

She pleaded earnestly once more, imploring him with entreaties, cajoling him with affection, beseeching him with the eager supplication of a child. More than once he was tempted to give in to her, his heart torn with his love and his desire to make her happy, but each time he pulled himself up before it was too late. It would be folly, madness to let her do as she wished; he could not, *could not* allow this girl he loved so dearly to be seen again among the habitués of such a disreputable place, to all appearance in the same rôle from which he had rescued her!

"No—no, Ev', it simply can't be done. If our love is worth anything, it's worth such sacrifices." He caught her wrists and continued passionately: "Ev', it's the beginning of the

end for us if I let you go up there. You're through with that kind of life, and I am, too. We must make something beautiful out of our love, Ev'. It's worth it. There isn't such an awful lot of love like ours in the world, and it's too wonderful, too precious to throw away. We want a home, Ev', and children, and a decent life. We must live down all that ugly past and build something that's fine and good and pure to blot it all out——"

"Aw, you talk like a parson!" She wrenched her hands free and stood before him, her frail figure defiant, her blue eyes flashing. "You make me sick!" she cried violently; "you make me sick! D'you hear that? You make me sick! I told Dais' I was coming up there to-night, and I tell you right now, Sam Smith, I'm going!"

"No, you're not, Ev'." He spoke sternly, all the tenderness and pleading that had made his voice tremble a moment before gone.

"We'll see about that!" Her breath came and went, her breast rose and fell. Sam watched her as she reached for her hat from the shelf beside the bed, and with trembling fingers adjusted it before the mirror; then she jerked her arms into her coat, caught up purse, gloves, and started for the door. With a quick movement he slid into a chair, its back against it.

"You let me out of here!" She was quivering with passion.

"No, Ev',—I'm not going to let you leave this room to-night."

"You got no right——"

"Oh, yes, I have, Ev'; I got the right of a man who loves you to protect you against yourself."

"You get away from that door!"

"I'm not going to move, Ev'."

"You get away from there or—or I'll call a cop!"

Sam stared at her while the full degradation of the scene sank deep into his consciousness. "Call a cop!" How eloquently it betrayed the prostitute's mind! This girl to whom he had given all his love, for whom he had sacrificed everything in the world! He sat regarding her, a giddiness assailing him as he felt the twist of the knife she had plunged into his heart.

She stood before him, breathing hard, her hands clutching her purse and gloves pressed close to her breast; then she gave way to helpless tears, tottered to the bed, and flung her-

self down upon it, surrendering herself completely to rage and grief.

A long hour later, he rose, locked the door carefully, hid the key, and began soberly to wash and put away the cold and greasy dishes of the dinner over which they had had such a merry time only a little while before.

For days Evelyn remained subdued, estranged, resentful. It was the better part of a week before he won her back to her old mood of loving tenderness and sweet companionship.

§ 4

Two weeks before Christmas he began to suspect something was definitely wrong. He was well aware by this time that the larger part of most of her days was spent with Dais' and others of her old friends uptown. He had not been able to bring himself to force an issue in the matter. It *was* lonely for her, she was entitled to some diversion, and he loved her, —oh, how dearly he loved her! His need for her was often like a burning flame. Sometimes in one of the narrow aisles between the shelves and bins in the stock-room when he was alone, the sheets of a partly filled order in his hand, the thought of her would come to him, and he would wonder with desperate yearning what she was doing. The vision of the straw-colored hair, the darkly ringed blue eyes, the frail, girlish figure would rise before him and he would lean his forehead against the wall, with eyes closed, murmuring fiercely: "Ev', Ev',—oh, Ev'!" He feared for her, he feared for himself, he feared for their love and happiness.

What roused his distrust of her at this particular time was that she began getting up in the mornings at the same time he did, preparing his breakfast, then dressing herself for the street. Usually he had managed his own simple meal and departed, leaving her still in bed, receiving a drowsy kiss from her at the last minute. Her new energy disturbed him. She accounted for it by saying she loved to prowl through the stores and study the merchandise displayed for Christmas.

"I can't spend a cent, but a look don't cost me a thing," she asserted glibly. Sam was confident that in some way Dais' was connected with these early hours. Evelyn was especially loving to him and her affection but strengthened

his suspicions. When he arrived from work in the evening, he would find her tired and haggard-looking, dinner far from ready, indicating she had just come home. He would watch her face intently, wondering in a torment of doubt and jealousy what she was up to.

"Ev'," he would say earnestly to her, "do you honestly love me?"

No matter how fatigued, she was always in a cheerful, even gay mood.

"Oh, Sammy-boy,—how can you ask? You know I do."

"Sweetheart . . . Listen to me, Ev': you're not jeopardizing our happiness?"

She would laugh at his seriousness and tweak his nose.

"No, I'm 'not jeopardizing our happiness,' " she would repeat in playful mockery.

"Ev', . . . I just can't stand . . ."

"What?"

"You're not being square with me!"

"But I am—I am—I *am!*"

She would put her thin arms around his neck and strain his head to her breast, kissing his hair rapturously.

It was hard to believe her either deceitful or perfidious,—yet she offered no explanation of her unusual conduct.

One night when he turned into Christopher Street, his shrill whistle did not bring her to the window, and when he reached their room he found it empty. Fear clutched at his heart, but a quick inspection of her trinkets on the bureau and her clothes in the closet reassured him. But hard on the heels of his routed terror, came a black cloud of suspicion; he sank into the Morris-chair and fell to brooding. What was she about? What unfair dealing occupied her? What kept her out so late? . . . Hobnobbing with Dais' and the rest of her profligate friends, drinking their wine and cocktails, smoking their cigarettes, helping them spend the money they wheedled with their blandishments from men acquaintances! No wonder she found it hard to come back to a dreary, one-room home to cook a frugal meal for a tired man! They were bent on taking her from him; circumstances were combined to rob him of her!

When her step sounded in the hall, there was no lightening of his black mood. One glance at her showed him she had reduced herself to a state of exhaustion by her gadding, and he felt no pity for her.

"I'm *so* sorry I'm late, Sammy-boy. I tried my best to get here, but I just couldn't make it. I ran like everything."

There was none of the usual warmth in the kiss he gave her.

"Don't be cross, Sammy-boy,—*please* don't be cross. I'm so tired I could cry and if you're mean to me, I—can't—stand—it!"

That was her usual way of getting round him, he reminded himself. For once he was going to show her he was not to be fooled.

"Oooo-h!" She dropped into a chair and began to whimper, one little gloved hand cupped over her face. Sam let her cry. Tired or not, it was time she realized she could not go on hoodwinking him.

"Where you been all day? . . . Where you been every day this week? . . . I'm no sucker, Ev'—and I'm not going to let you play me for one."

"Oooo-h! . . . Oooo-h!" She rocked gently back and forth, moaning to each oscillation.

Sam vented all the seething thoughts that had been his for days. He did not spare her,—he did not spare himself. He covered the whole familiar ground and some of his words were cutting, even cruel. He meant them to be, he said to himself fiercely.

Her whimpering gave place to broken sobbing. Blindly she fumbled in her shabby purse and held out to him a key attached to a round brass tag. Something in her manner stopped him. Perplexed and conscious of vague uneasiness, he took the key from her. On the tag was stamped a number and beneath it the name of a department store.

"What's this?" He had to repeat his question before she could gather sufficient composure to answer.

"It's my—my locker key at Macy's," she sobbed. "I'm part—part of the holiday extras; I've been w-working since Monday."

He stood rooted before her, stricken, his shame slowly beginning to suffocate him.

"I—I wanted to surprise you with a Christmas p-present."

"Ah—*don't!*"

Her quivering, spasmodic heaving continued. He wanted to take her in his arms, yet he could not move; it seemed basely hypocritical to try to comfort her in the next breath after so grievous a hurt.

"Oh, Ev'—Ev', forgive me." He spoke against his muffling hands that covered his face, the finger-tips pressed hard against his eyeballs to counteract with pain the misery in his heart.

"I do—I do, Sammy." She rose and came with trembling uncertain steps toward him and with another rending cry of "Oh, Ev'!" he gathered her to his breast. Her hair, loosened, tumbled from her head, her hat dangling half-way still pinned to its coils. But she gave no heed to it, nor did he. Her face was drenched with tears and he kissed them and kissed them, his own wetting her cheeks.

§ 5

Christmas Eve fell on Saturday night and the store at Fourteenth Street remained open until nine o'clock. Evelyn had told him in the morning when they parted that he must manage his own solitary meal as she would be given supper money and would take it with some of the other girls from the store in a neighboring restaurant. He carried home a pound of frankfurters and a bag of doughnuts, and considered he fared very well on these and coffee with a remnant of pie he discovered in Evelyn's tiny improvised store closet. His heart was not gay, however. It seemed a grievous thing to him that Ev' should have to work; he knew she was not strong enough; he had seen a wan, drawn look of weariness upon her face night after night when she came home after the long hours on her feet. It was apparent to him she had lost weight since she had been at work, and every ounce was important to Ev'. He consoled himself by the thought that better times were at hand: there was the "raise" Jerry Haines had promised him after the first of January.

When he had finished his simple meal, he decided he would walk over to the department store and wait for her to come out at the employees' entrance. It was a nipping night and the room was chilly. Evelyn, he knew, would want but one thing when she came home and that would be the comfort of her warm bed. He remembered his mother used to put hot bricks between the sheets on cold nights at Mendon. He went on an exploring expedition and in the basement the janitor helped him locate one. He washed it carefully and put it into the oven to get hot. Discovering a broken grocery

box in the basement, he begged it also of the janitor. This he split with his knife into kindling and was pleased and surprised at the sizable stack of sticks it made. He brushed out the grate and laid the makings of a fire. In case she might need hot water, he put the kettle on and lit the burner beneath it. Surveying the room, now and then, he tried to think of something further which might add to her comfort. When nothing more occurred to him and it was nearly nine o'clock, he went to meet her.

She came out, with a surging, hilarious crowd of other girls, like a beaten lily, and gasped with pleasure when she saw him, and hung wearily upon his arm as they turned their steps homeward.

"Well, Sammy-boy, I'm fired. They ain't keeping any of the extras on after Christmas and Miss Mooney—that's the woman in charge I had to report to,—told me they are laying off some of the regulars."

"You aren't disappointed?"

"Well, a little bit, maybe,—but I expected it. It don't make no diff', only that fiver a week looked pretty good to me."

"I'm going to get my raise next month,—don't forget that."

"Did they give you anything for Christmas?"

"No-ope,—but Jerry handed me some cigars."

"They won't help pay the rent."

"Oh, no,—but it was nice of Jerry. He's not my employer, you know."

"That was mean of me, Sammy; of course it was nice of him. . . . Look!" She held up a little yellow envelope. "Five whole dollars," she said triumphantly. "What do you want for a Christmas present, Sammy-boy."

"Nothing, my darling, that you have had to work so hard for."

"But, Sammy, that makes it all the nicer, the money I've earned myself."

They argued the matter amiably as they walked along.

"Sammy-boy," she interrupted suddenly, "do you love Ev'? . . . Do you trust Ev'?"

"Why, of course I do."

"You won't be cross if I tell you something?"

His spirits sank. "No,—I won't be cross."

"Promise?"

"Why, what is it, Ev'?"

"Promise?"

"All right, I promise." Dread of what she was about to disclose weighted his heart with lead.

"Dais' came down to the store to-day and looked me up, and she brought me one or two little gifts from the girls. . . . I think it was dear of them! . . . Then she put a little wad of bills in my hand and told me it was from her and I was to spend it for anything I like. . . . Now, Sammy, don't you think that was darling of Dais'?"

"How much was it?" His tone was lifeless.

"Twenty-five! Just think of it: twenty-five dollars! It's going to help us out immensely. Now can't I buy you a little Christmas present out of the money I've earned myself?"

"Dais' wheedled the money out of 'Dutch' Koenig and then handed it over to you!" He thought these words, but he did not say them. How could he rebuff her when she was so eager? How turn upon her then and there, and with stern criticism tell her she must give the money back? How hurt her when she was so full of love for him and so grateful for what seemed her friend's generosity?

"I wish you hadn't taken it," he said heavily.

"Now—now, Sammy-boy, you promised you wouldn't be cross."

"I'm not." He forced his voice to a lighter tone. "You must be dead."

"It was frightful in the store to-day. You never saw such jamming and cramming; they mobbed our counter. I'm glad I'm not going back; I don't think I could stick it out another week. My feet positively ache from standing and my back's on fire. You see there ain't a place or a moment all day long when you can sit down and rest; I could cry I'm so tired."

When they reached the house in which they lived, Sam picked her up in his arms and carried her lightly and easily to the third floor. She marveled at the feat.

"I'm not as good as I was," he said panting a little when he set her down. "Up on the farm I could've done it two or three times and never noticed it."

As soon as they were within their room, he lit the huddle of paper and sticks in the fireplace. At once the flames crackled briskly, the wood snapping, flickering firelight playing about the dim chamber in which only the lamp was burning.

"Oh, how splendid, Sammy! That's simply glorious! . . .

And you cleaned up and everything! You're a darling to Ev', Sammy. Did you have a lonely dinner?"

"You bet I had and every thought was of you. Get to bed, now. Look,—I have a hot brick for you."

"Oh, Sammy,—aren't you cute!"

He wrapped the brick in a towel and shoved it between the sheets, Evelyn rapidly divested herself of her clothes and gratefully climbed in, settling with a long sigh of relief. He adjusted the covers over her shoulders, and kissed her temple.

"Does the brick work?"

"Ooo-h, it's just divine! . . . You're awfully good to your old Ev', Sammy-boy; do you know that? . . . Lord, this feels good! . . . Don't make no diff' about that money, does it, Sammy?"

CHAPTER XIII

§ 1

The early March wind blew with the icy breath of the north upon the frozen city. For weeks the snow stood banked in high clumsy walls on either side of the streets, a muffled silence prevailed, broken by the rending shrieks of slowly turning wheels and the deadened sound of men's voices. New York lay in the grip of winter and the thermometer hung about the freezing point.

Sam was miserable with a heavy cold. There were holes the size of a dollar in both shoes, and every morning he took them off in a secluded aisle between the shelves and bins of the stock room, to insert bits of cardboard from the packing department. From week to week he had been intending to have his shoes repaired, but he hated to ask Evelyn for the necessary dollar. Their shortness of funds was an increasing irritation to her; of late she had grown frankly sour about it. It had been a grievous blow when the promised "raise" in January had turned out to be only for one dollar a week. Jerry Haines told Sam he had put his problem squarely before Mr. Hartshone and had urged a substantial increase, but Mr. Hartshone had remarked that any man could keep himself and a wife comfortably in New York on a dollar a day, and with his blue pencil had written "$1.00" after Sam's name on the list of employees he had been discussing with the head of the stock-room.

"I'd like to see him try it," Sam had said with much bitterness a hundred times since.

He studied the day laborers in the street whose wages were a dollar-and-a-quarter or a dollar-and-a-half a day. Possibly they understood the secret of maintaining a family "comfortably" on what they earned; he was certain he and Evelyn did not. He had gone over expenses carefully with her, checking every item of rent, food, gas, laundry; he failed to see

where she could economize further. They had just enough upon which to eke out a bare existence; there was no margin for extras, and it seemed to Sam that never a week went by that did not present its unexpected expense. Evelyn tried to get work. She went out several times to inquire at some of the big stores, and she answered advertisements in the newspapers. Her efforts met with no success. For three weeks in February, she had been able to earn a few dollars by keeping an eye in the afternoons on a baby of a woman who lived on the floor below. But this had proven unsatisfactory; Evelyn declared she could never plan to do anything without this woman selecting the same time to ask her to mind her child.

There remained a move into cheaper quarters. Sam inquired and was told that there were plenty of rooms on the Lower East Side which they could have for half, even less than half the amount the Christopher Street apartment cost. He begged Evelyn to investigate some of these places, but she showed no interest in following up the suggestions, and betrayed irritation whenever he mentioned it.

"Heaven knows we're bad enough off where we are!" she would exclaim. "I don't propose to live like a pig!"

"Oh, Ev'—Ev', what do you want to talk that way for!"

"Well, what do you want me to live in a nasty cheap tenement for?"

Always combating him, Sam felt the influence of her old associates uptown,—Dais' and her "crowd." When he had Evelyn to himself, when for one reason or another she had not been with them, she was all that he could wish for in a dear companion. Then would come an evening when he would detect the smell of liquor and cigarettes upon her breath; he would know at once she had been with Dais' and had had lunch with her and others of her old "pals." Perhaps "Dutch" Koenig had come in late in the afternoon upon the merry group and mixed them all cocktails! There was a marked difference in her after such experiences; discontent was written in her face, she was silent, indifferent to him, uncommunicative. She never told him what she had been doing or where she had been; she never quoted Dais' nor mentioned her name. Dais' was a tabooed subject. What distressed Sam most was the fact that Evelyn accepted money from Dais'; he didn't know whether she begged it or whether it was pressed

upon her. However it was managed, he was aware she obtained it, and he visioned all too clearly the process by which it was extracted from its original source. "Dutch" Koenig was being coaxed with a few extra blandishments for a "little something" for Dais's poor friend, Evelyn! It sent the blood burning into Sam's cheeks whenever he thought of it, but thinking such things was madness; his only course was to keep his mind shut of them. In some way, the struggling hope persisted, he and Evelyn would worry through,—in some way they would win to the light beyond all this blackness that lay thick before them. Often when he realized all that was at stake, a convulsive twitch seized him. He could not brook the thought of losing Evelyn. Dimly, a vague shadow among the other shadows, a wraith that existed just beyond his vision, just outside his line of sight, there stalked a grim and dreadful specter,—not a laughing nor a mocking one, now,—but one with the face of death. He never quite beheld it, never was quite able to identify it, but he felt its presence and he feared with mortal fear that little by little it was drawing nearer.

Thoughts of his uncle, aunt, Ruth, Mr. Wright, the cheerful atmosphere of Dr. McIntosh's church, the bustle of the Sunday-school Parlors, Narcissa and her baby, came frequently to him these days to trouble and disturb him. He had believed he could rid himself of all these friends and never give them a single regretful thought. Evelyn had seemed adequate ten months ago, worth the sacrifice of love, friendship, and interest these old connections represented. But now, try as he would to banish them from his mind, he found himself thinking of them, missing them. He wished there was one to whom he now could turn for advice and help. They all thought him wicked, living a life of sin. At Christmas-time he had received a card from Mr. Wright with good wishes and signed "Ever your faithful and affectionate friend." A pair of bedroom slippers and a letter from Narcissa contained only news of herself and family, without reproach; and a postal came from his uncle on which he had written: "We always pray for you and for the day you'll come back to us." Also, there had arrived two linen handkerchiefs embroidered with his initials, without card or message, which he had recognized as the handiwork of Ruth. These messages and gifts had stirred him, yet he reminded himself resentfully that those who professed to love him wanted to be friendly on their terms, not his; they would have nothing to

do with Evelyn nor with him as long as he remained loyal to her. When he was rich, they would be ready to make peace with him; now, when he needed them to tide him over these barren months, to encourage him and bid him persevere, one and all turned a cold shoulder towards him.

Taylor Evans was the only one to whom he might have gone to air his troubles, but the debt he owed him had reared a wall between them. At least Sam felt so. He despised having to explain to him why the money had not been repaid, or how it was that not so much as a dollar had been brought him. No longer did he feel free to visit him with the old familiarity and confidence.

A day came when Sam realized something definite must be done. His cold was considerably worse, he was coughing day and night, and quick movements of his head made objects swim before his eyes. Evelyn was excited and upset; she had not been like herself for days. She was restless, irritable often, given to tears, of which she made no explanation. Whenever he attempted to console her, she was almost frantically affectionate, kissing him on face and lips, hugging and straining him to her. Her manner worried him; her secretiveness alarmed him; ever just beyond his range of vision stalked that specter with the face of death. Sam had one last string to his bow and that was Mr. Faber; he believed Mr. Faber, if made acquainted with his desperate need, would help him. Unless the junior partner could be persuaded to intercede in his behalf with Mr. Hartshone, Sam felt that it must be the end of Evelyn and himself. He would kill her,—first her, then himself. Never must she go back to that life of shame and horror.

For a week and more, he awaited an opportunity at the close of work, to find Mr. Faber alone in his office. When the hour came, what shred of hope he had had for the interview deserted him, but mechanically he pursued his purpose. It seemed to him the first step in the final dissolution of himself and Evelyn, the beginning of the last chapter of their story. He realized he felt giddy, looked gaunt and wild-eyed as he stepped into his employer's office. A fit of coughing seized him as he closed the door behind him, and he had to steady himself with a quick reach for the back of a chair.

"My God, Schmidt,—you're sick, ain'd you? Sid down."

Mr. Faber pushed a seat toward him, but Sam declined it. He stated his case bluntly.

"I got to have more money."

He went on explaining gruffly his pressing circumstances. Mr. Faber scowled and stuck out his lips. Sam knew as he watched him, he was going to refuse. Before he could speak, Sam took a step forward and laid his fist heavily upon the desk.

"I just want you to understand one thing, sir,—and that is I *got* to have it!"

The man's eyes opened wide with a start and he looked straight into the other's unfaltering gaze. Both were conscious of the moment's tenseness. Sam, as he stood glaring at his superior, experienced a curious sense of power; he felt it rise up in him and emanate from him as a compelling force, he felt it reach out like a giant's hand and subdue the other's opposing will.

"Vell now—vell now, let's see vat can be done for you, Schmidt. How much are ve paying you now?" Sam told him.

"I see, I see." Other questions followed; they discussed the situation.

"Vell, how vould you like dis: how vould you like to go oud on der road? You see, Schmidt, dat's der only vay I can help you. Der selling end of dis business, dat's mine; Mr. Hartshone has der say about everything else. You're a nice poy und I like you, und I tink, by golly, you're right und it vas time you got a chance ad something else. You ain'd no laborer,—you know dat, Schmidt. 'Member dat day you game oop to der house? Vell, my vife said den you vas no laborer. Vy don't you dry und see vot you could sell for us? I tell you vat I'll do, Schmidt,—I can't give you a raise, but you go oud on der road and ve'll pay you ten per cent on vat new orders you get. How's dat?"

"I guess that's all right, Mr. Faber. I think I can sell our goods; I know them pretty well." Sam spoke without enthusiasm but already he felt a loosening of the tight bonds about his heart, a lifting of the burden. This *was* a way out,—this *did* give him a chance to do something!

"Of course, you understand, Schmidt, your salary vill be charged against vat business you bring in."

They talked of how soon the change could be effected. Mr. Hartshone's approval would first have to be secured, and Jerry Haines must be given time to find someone to help Farley when the latter was promoted to fill Sam's place.

"I'll talk to Mr. Hartshone in der morning," Mr. Faber said,

"und say, Schmidt, you vont to look after dat cold of yours. Dat's bad; you look done oop."

"Thank you, sir,—thank you very much. I guess I'm all right."

But was he? As he stood still a moment in the outer office, he put his hand to his head and closed his eyes. Something was wrong; he felt on fire.

He experienced none of the elation he had expected,—neither had he any misgivings as to whether or not he could succeed as a salesman. The only thought of which he was conscious was that his new work would take him from Evelyn; if he made any extensive trips he might have to be away from her for several nights. Still, the opportunity was not to be thrown aside; it was a big step up for him. Evelyn was sure to be pleased. What had been troubling her for some time, he suspected, had been her lack of faith in him, in his ability; she had been asking herself if she was tied to a laborer for the rest of her life, a laborer who would never command more than a laborer's wages. Sam thought with satisfaction of how he should tell her of Mrs. Faber's remark about him. He hoped Evelyn would appreciate what a big chance this was. It was a real promotion,—a far more substantial one than if his salary had been doubled. He brought to mind some of the long order sheets he had handled; one or two like them, or even a few small ones each week, would net him handsome commissions.

At Eighth Street, after he had descended to the street from the elevated station, he stopped at Weir's drug store and bought a dime's worth of quinine pills. He decided he would take three of them as soon as he reached home and make Evelyn mix him a hot drink with a stiff jolt of whiskey in it, if she had some. He did not want anything to eat. He felt he must throw off the cold at once, now that this new activity had been offered him. . . . It *was* good news he brought Evelyn; she was bound to be tremendously elated.

He was disappointed in not finding her at home when he reached the room. That meant she was with Dais', and that when she came in, she'd be in one of her cross silent moods. His tidings would cheer her; there would soon be an end to Dais' and this gadding when he was able to provide properly for her. The room was unusually cold, it seemed to him. He decided to lie down on the bed and wait for Evelyn. Pulling

the comforter over him, he huddled beneath it; he ought to take off his coat, but he was really too cold. His eyelids were hot upon his eyes and as he closed them, bright circles began to wheel before them; the blood roared in his ears and he could feel the plunge of it in his temples. His head was aching and he realized it had been aching sharply for the past hour or two.

A long time later he awoke, pushed himself into a sitting posture and stared about him. Something was wrong with his eyes; he could hardly see. It was very cold; the single gas jet, which he had lit when he came in, screamed now, a small flaring torch. Evelyn was not yet home. The room was bare, deserted. In spite of the cold, he felt burning up, his head rocked, dry heat consumed him. His clothes, mussy and wrinkled, clung to his body; his collar choked him; it was like a red-hot band about his neck. With a fierce wrench he tore it off and loosened his shirt about his throat. The light danced in his eyes, the room swam. What time was it?

He dragged himself to his feet, swaying drunkenly, reaching to wall and foot-board to steady himself. The alarm clock on the wobbly chest of drawers appeared a blurred white disk. He seized it and held it close, but it was a moment or two before he could read the angle of its hands. . . . Three o'clock! . . . *God! It wasn't possible!* . . . Where was Ev'? . . . She was in trouble, she needed and wanted him,—and he was *sick!* God, but he was sick! . . . He stumbled to the center of the room, clutching the furniture. Then upon the table where it lay propped against a book, a white envelope obtruded itself upon his distorted vision for the first time. Twice his trembling fingers reached for it and he fell heavily against the table as he thrust a thick finger beneath the flap and burst it open. But now with the fluttering sheets before him, covered with her scrawled writing, he could not read her words. "Dearest Sammy-boy." That was as far as he could decipher. He flattened the pages upon the table and steadied himself by leaning heavily forward, both hands, palms down, pressed hard upon the paper. "Dearest Sammy-boy." He blinked his eyes, rubbed them, held the paper close and then again at arm's-length. The black letters ran together like water-bugs. Staggering, holding to whatever came to hand, he made his way to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and plunged his head beneath its slow trickle. The icy contact felt refreshing, cooling

his burning skin. With dripping hair and face, water running down his neck, his shirt half drenched, he tottered back to the table and picked up the fateful message. Gripping hard his teeth, he tried with all his will power to focus his vision on those dancing lines. "Dearest Sammy-boy"; he could make nothing of it. "Dearest Sammy-boy"; the rest was jumble.

"Damn it," he sobbed, "I will—I will—I will."

It was no use. The fever in his blood whipped it to a mad gallop that fogged every sense. Suddenly he gave up with a terrible cry.

"Oh God,—I'm blind—I'm blind! . . . Ev'! . . . Help me, Ev'! . . . Oh, God, Ev', I'm blind!"

He slid down upon his knees slowly, and after a minute sank heavily to the floor.

A burst of laughter broke upon his ears. Where he lay he was just able to discern Mehitabel careening to one side upon the mantel. The doll was rocking with mirth, loosing peal on peal, pointing at him, leering at him, shrieking its ribald jubilation. The noise beat upon him like thunder. Immediately Mehitabel began to grow; at once the creature was of enormous size. It climbed down off the mantel and came toward him with ponderous tread, becoming larger and larger with every step. It stood towering above him and then commenced to press its face nearer and nearer his own, its grinning features changing into hideous abnormalities, every moment getting bigger and bigger and bigger until in a final swift descent, the terrible visage rushed down upon him shutting out the light, the room, plunging the whole world in darkness.

CHAPTER XIV

§ 1

WHEELS within wheels within wheels,—circles beginning at pin points, whirling to larger circumferences,—rings, hoops, globes,—spinning, spinning, spinning,—overlapping, intermingling, intercircling,—all transparent, tinted purple, green and blue,—beautiful, ceaseless, exhausting. Far, far away at the outermost rim screamed a tiny flaring torch of flame. "You've got to turn it out—you've got to turn it out—you've got to turn it out." A voice throbbed the command continuously. Up from submerged depths through limitless space in which the whirling spheres gave place to inky blackness, through muck and smothering folds of cottony, webby substances, battled consciousness flogged by that insistent voice. Up—up—up! . . . There it was at last! Light! Horrible, dazzling light,—horrible pain, giddiness, the dance of devils before his eyes, that screaming jet of flame above his head,—the horrible deserted room! Long, long afterwards he remembered dragging himself to his feet, steadying himself with trembling hands, groping his way toward the bed, struggling to free himself from some of his clothes, and falling at length with a groan of wretchedness into its waiting comfort. The gas jet could flare forever. He was going to die; death was near; he would call no one; they would find him after several days,—after he was dead!—and the gas jet would still be screaming! Back came the whirling, flying circles,—spinning, spinning, spinning, only this time they were all red,—pink, salmon, and blood-toned scarlet.

Eons later they were all sent flying like myriad particles of a suddenly shattered glass, by an enormous hand and at the same time a deep man's voice said distinctly: "The fish are a merry folk,—they dance like elves!" and a still deeper man's voice answered rationally this absurdity by, "Get hold of his feet there; now then." Sam felt himself being hoisted upon a

camel's back, the animal rose to his knees before he was fairly seated and he was nearly pitched on to his head. Then Mr. Wright reached up from the ground where he was standing and said: "We're going to look after you, Sam; don't worry; you're all right and Taylor's going to lock everything up." Ev' wouldn't like that! She wouldn't like anyone meddling with her things. . . . Where *was* Ev'?

Then the camel set off and carried him across hot burning desert sands; he could hear the animal's three-toed feet making a great clatter; the surface of the desert had all turned hard like a shining ball-room floor; clump—clump—clump! Suddenly he was aware he was in an ambulance and the figure in white beside him was Jack Cheney.

"You're Jack,—aren't you?" he said and the young man nodded but told him to lie quiet, and then Sam saw it wasn't Jack at all. The lurch of the vehicle hurt his head. It was an outrage to drive so fast. Didn't they realize how sick he was?

A long blank followed in which all sensation ceased. When he opened his eyes again it was night. There was a dim light somewhere and there were many vague black shadows. A woman moved about and she too was in black with a face inside a black hood like a nun. She came and bent over him; she was a nice person, very friendly, and she took hold of his hand, gently smoothed and patted it.

"Where's Evelyn?" he asked her.

"She's coming presently," the woman answered, but he knew she was not speaking the truth. He heard a man groaning and the woman hurried away. He saw her leaning over the next bed. He raised his head a little from his pillow and saw that there was a line of beds along either side of the room and there were people in them. Oblivion again and then it seemed to him he was back in his old room at his uncle's house and that it was time to go to church; it was very late indeed and if he didn't get up at once he wouldn't be ready. He struggled, but a man beside the bed kept pushing him back upon the pillow. Sam turned upon him angrily.

"I'll be late for church if you keep me here, and my uncle will be very angry."

"No, no, Sam. I won't be angry,—indeed I won't."

It was his uncle's voice, but Sam knew the man detaining him was only imitating it. He roused himself to expostulate and then he saw his uncle standing at the foot of his bed and

there were tears in his eyes! He sank back gratefully and pretended he was asleep while the man who was sitting beside the bed, said:

"I shouldn't be surprised if he pulled through. Extraordinary vitality, you know."

Then came a morning when he awoke to full consciousness. He glanced about the ward and saw other sick men with gaunt faces and unshaven chins. The nurse who was tending them was Sister Mary Agnes. Just how he happened to know this, he could not guess. He felt very weak; he lifted up his hand before his eyes to look at it; it was little more than skin and bone, the hand of a skeleton. He touched his face and beside the soft bristles upon his jaw and chin, he could feel the hollows in his cheeks and the prominence of his cheek-bones.

With an effort he turned his head toward the window across the room. Outside a bright early morning sunshine was flooding the world. Snow lay in triangular patches in the corners of the window and along the dividing sash. The bare branches of a tree whose tips all but swished the window's panes were studded with broken snow incrustations.

As he lay thus, languid and listless, it came to him that Evelyn had left him. She had gone away; she had quit him! Life for him, now, meant life without her,—his days would be empty of her face! . . . A hot tear trickled across the bridge of his nose and dropped upon the pillow. . . . Oh, why had they saved him? Why hadn't they let him die? He was so willing, so eager to die!

Sister Mary Agnes was busy at her rounds with the other patients. Presently she reached his side with a granite basin of warm water and a clean wash-rag. She wiped his face and hands, brushed back his thick, tangled black hair, and took his temperature.

"Well there now," she said as she read the degree, "you're a real nice good boy," and she entered the finding on the chart of figures that hung at the foot of his bed. "Dr. Sitgraves will be pleased when he sees that!"

There ensued the early morning routine of the ward, the visit of the interne at seven, a breakfast tray or two, the usual fussing and cleaning, the brisk steps of the white-shod orderlies upon the dark polished linoleum, the voluminous skirts of Sister Claudia, Sister Benedicta, and Sister Mary Agnes busy with their ministrations. The incessant noises irritated his

head, all the glaring white hurt his eyes. He wished petulantly they would go away and leave him to himself. He wanted to turn quietly over on his pillow and die. Wearily he slept, waked, dozed and slept. . . . He wondered if Evelyn knew how sick he was. Perhaps if they sent word to Dais' she would tell Ev' and Ev' would come. . . .

After a time, his eyes drifted open and he found Mr. Wright sitting beside his bed smiling in an amused, affectionate manner. Sam was conscious of distaste.

"Well—well, my boy, you're on the mend they tell me. They wouldn't let me see you last week, but I've been here every day. I insisted they let me in to-day; I told them I wouldn't take 'No' for an answer. Sister What's-her-name tells me you've turned the corner. You don't realize what a fright you've given us all. I never expected to see you walking 'round again. You've been very, very sick, you know. How do you feel?"

"Better." Sam's lips formed the word, but no sound came. He wished Mr. Wright would go away.

"Of course—of course. You've made a glorious struggle, you've fought the good fight. 'To the victor belong the spoils.' I'm proud of you,—we're all proud of you. You weren't the kind that's easily downed. You don't know how hard we've all been praying for you, Sam. Your uncle and aunt have thought of nothing else. Doctor McIntosh said a special prayer for you last Sunday in church. We can all go down on our knees again and thank Almighty God you've been spared to us."

Sam closed his eyes. It was too much. He let the easy voice flow on, but presently his attention was caught again.

". . . Well, sir, I couldn't find out where you lived; they had only your uncle's address at your office. Finally, I bethought me of Taylor Evans and fortunately he had it. We found you in a terrible condition. Guess you had a fever of a hundred and five; I never felt a skin so hot. There's no question but that you would have died if we hadn't come when we did. Your clothes were strewn about the room, the gas was burning, the place fairly smelled, and you were quite out of your head, delirious, raving. I hadn't expected to find you alone, you know, but there was the letter that explained everything. I looked at you, lying there half undressed in the tumbled bed, muttering to yourself and sometimes shouting out loud, and my heart just bled for you, Sam. So we got the janitor and sent

him flying over to St. Vincent's and in about twenty minutes he came back with the ambulance, and then we bundled you into it and I left Taylor to take charge of things and lock up. 'God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.' How strange and wonderful are the workings of Providence, Sam! You know I had been worrying about you a great deal just before all this happened. It came to me one night——"

Sister Mary Agnes approached.

"Ah well, my time's up," said Mr. Wright. "I'm 'fraid I've over-stayed my allowance. Sorry to have to go, Sam, but I'll be 'round to-morrow. I know how anxious you are to hear about everything, but you can't expect to get back on your feet in a jiffy. Little by little, you know, Sam; every day a little stronger, a little bit nearer your old self. Don't be impatient."

§ 2

A day or two later his uncle came to see him, and afterwards Aunt Sarah accompanied by Ruth. The two women brought a pot of hyacinths, set it on the little table at his bedside, and left him a Bible to read. One afternoon Taylor Evans dropped in.

Sam experienced his first interest at sight of him. He wanted Taylor to send word to Evelyn and let her know how sick he had been. He felt he could trust Taylor, but when at last he forced himself to mention her name and his request, Taylor frowned in a troubled way and studied his linked fingers.

"You can find out where she is through Dais',—Dais' will know where she is," Sam suggested, trying to keep the note of eagerness out of his voice.

Taylor shook his head.

"Dais' isn't in town now; all of them must be on the road by this time. . . . Look here, Sam,—I think you'd better give up that girl. I don't think it's any use your trying to make anything decent out of her. I read her letter the night we found you; the pages were scattered on the table and all over the floor. She isn't worth while, Sam old boy. You love her, —I know that,—but she hasn't got it in her to love you the same way. She's thrown you down for a cheap salary and her old crowd, and none of them is worth a damn. You want to wash your hands of her, old man, and forget her."

"What she done?"

"You know,—that road show she was going with, one of those 'burlesque' entertainments,—what they call a 'leg show.'"

"I don't remember," said Sam frowning.

"Her letter . . ." Taylor began . . .

Sam shook his head. "No, I didn't read it; I was too sick that night; I couldn't make it out."

The other considered, vaguely puzzled.

"I happen to have it with me," he went on presently. "I took it when I went back to your rooms to clean up a bit; I knew you wouldn't want to have it lying around, and I meant to give it to you one of these days, but perhaps this is the right time. . . . I'll tell you, Sam: you read it over carefully,—I'll leave it with you now,—and after you've thought about it, if you want me to write her, I will, but I think you'll agree with me there isn't any use going on."

Sam took the crumpled white envelope from him and pushed it beneath his pillow, but it was an hour or more after Taylor had departed before he reached for it, flattened out its smeared and creased pages across his bent knees, and commenced to read for the first time the scrawled message that began, "Dearest Sammy-boy." The paper was blistered here and there and the ink had run where his wet hands had held it on that night of horror.

He read it through with a singular lack of emotion, conscious of great weakness as he turned its pages. It seemed a year and more since he had seen them. When he had finished, he went over it a second time, then folded it carefully with long thin fingers that trembled with the effort, and returned it to its torn envelope, pushing it back again beneath his pillow. For a time after that he lay looking across the room at the window where the snow in sodden triangles, grown dirty now, still hugged the corners, and watched the fast gathering shadows of the approaching night.

Taylor was right. It was all over between Evelyn and himself. He no longer wanted her to know about his illness; he no longer wanted to have her back. "Dutch" Koenig had invested money in a show for Dais',—a musical comedy Ev described it,—and Dais' was to have a very good part in it Myrtle Flynn, Kitty Dale, and Evelyn had all been booked in the chorus. "The Belle of the Bowery" was a road show and it was slated for a long tour of many months; it was to open

in the Middle West, and, if business warranted, it would travel as far as the Coast. Evelyn did not expect to be back in New York within a year.

The regrets, the protestations, the underscored, and repeated entreaties for his forgiveness, her excuses and justifications, her violent assertions of love, left him unmoved. He was conscious only of hurt, of injury; he felt like a child whose trust is rewarded by a blow.

The lights in the ward began to be lit by the orderly. Their brightness troubled him. He closed his eyes with a pained frown and slowly moved his head from side to side in negative fashion.

It was over,—it was ended,—there was no recapturing the golden hours of love, of sweet companionship. Evelyn had deserted him,—she had gone,—she hadn't understood,—she hadn't the capacity of understanding. Love had never meant to her what it did to him. She lacked the quality of loving. . . .

§ 3

But with returning strength, with life creeping steadily, though without welcome, back upon him day by day, the ache, the longing, the need and hunger for her commenced its torture. He could not banish her from his thoughts; at times he despised and hated her, fancying himself reviling and upbraiding her with stinging reproaches, at others with hard-shut teeth and fierce contracted frown his lips whispered her name and he crushed down the surging wave of emotion that threatened to overwhelm him. Always he thought of her. Condemning her, loving her, pitying her, hating her, wanting her,—it made no difference, his mind was ever busy with her. Weak she was, a creature of light moods and shallowness, pleasure-loving, incapable of deep or lasting emotion, a little girl—no more—who had dissipated whatever innate decency she possessed by the life she had chosen to live. But these reflections could not banish from him the memory of her dependency, her soft tendernesses and endearing caresses.

"Ev'—Ev'—Ev'!" His heart-beats throbbed with her name. "Ev',—I want you, I need you!" Voicelessly he spoke the words, tossing his head from side to side. "Ev',—I can't live without you,—come back,—come back to me, my little Ev'!"

He stilled his trembling lips with shut knuckles pressed hard against his mouth and squeezed the wetness from his eyes.

To go on—to go on—to go on. That was what was so hard to do. To pick up life again,—to begin to think about the future! He possessed no urge to live, he could not bring himself to take an interest in the plans that were suggested by those who came to sit with him and blithely talked of the days to come. Mr. Wright held forth upon the Wednesday Night Club, and told how his friends missed him and how they planned a gala party for him on the very first evening he was able to join them; he spoke of Adrian and how enthusiastically the young man wrote of Paris and of a successful concert he had given at the home of a Madame Devigny where the great Boulanger had been present and had praised his voice; he reported news of Vin Morrisey who wrote from Buenos Aires that the passes across the Andes were blocked with snow and that he would be obliged to spend the South American winter in Argentina punching cattle on the Pampas. Taylor Evans came, and drawled of books and of his manuscript, left new novels for Sam to read and outlined plans for the summer. Aunt Sarah and Ruth brought fruit and flowers, gazed upon him with sober, self-conscious eyes and tried to while away the moments of their visit by gossip of church and Sunday-school affairs. Uncle Cyrus with a grave air established himself beside the bed, rubbed his lean chin with troubled fingers, and spoke of his immortal soul.

"You've had a close call, a hard lesson, my nephew," he said to him, "and I earnestly hope you've learned a good deal from it. Mr. Wright has confided to me that this—this young woman with whom you've been so foolishly infatuated, has left you for more profitable fields. I could have prophesied as much, but you were deaf to words of warning. I'll say no more about the past than that I sincerely trust you now see the error of your ways and intend to make your peace with God and live a new Christian life. . . . Now, Sam, I want to talk to you. I confess that when you summarily left my house a year ago, I was very angry at you. But I don't blame you to-day as I did then. I've had time to think the matter over, and I feel now that if I had striven a little harder to be more sympathetic and understanding, you would have hesitated before taking so ill-advised a step. I've come to blame myself more than you; I've taken myself very severely to task for

what I feel was a failure in duty. I've prayed humbly for forgiveness, and I even went with my troubled conscience to Dr. McIntosh to seek his spiritual guidance. Since you've been sick, I've tried to do what was right by you and it's been something of a consolation to me to take care of you in the hour of need. As regards the future, I have this to say: If you are repentant, if you can say to me you are heartily sorry for your waywardness, I stand ready to resume our old relationship and be your loving uncle once again. Moreover, if you promise to lead a clean life from now on, I am ready to offer you my home as an asylum and welcome you back into my family."

On several visits, Uncle Cyrus continued in this strain. The matter appeared to be of the gravest importance to him, and Sam was vaguely puzzled by his earnestness. Listening apathetically, it never occurred to him the man eagerly awaited from him a statement of contriteness and a declaration as to his future conduct. Sam was entirely willing to do whatever his uncle wished him to; he had no heart or desire to combat anyone.

Mr. Wright took up the song where Uncle Cyrus left off.

"Now, Sam my boy, you must begin to think about what you're going to do when you're up and around again."

Mr. Wright always had about him a faint aroma of soap and talcum. As Sam lay in bed the vigorous health that emanated from him was often overpowering. He used to sit with a hand on either knee, his legs spread wide, elbows bent, and talk directly into the boy's face; frequently he made Sam feel faint.

"You'll soon be well enough to be moved out of here," he went on, "and the point is,—where are you to go? Your uncle, very generously, I consider, has been paying all your expenses. I offered to do it, but he insisted. Now it isn't exactly fair to him to go on staying here when the doctors pronounce you well enough to leave. Of course, you have a long convalescence still ahead of you, and that's going to take time and building up. Your uncle has expressed himself as willing to have you back into his home,—and I think that's the place for you. Your aunt and cousin can look after you, and with a few weeks' care and proper diet you'll be up and around again, ready to go back to work with old Hartshone. All you

have to do is to tell your uncle you're sorry for what you've done, and that you intend from now on to lead a clean, honest Christian life. You can do that, can't you, Sam? You can tell him that much, can't you? . . . Just think, Sam, how very wise it would be for you to have his help and confidence again. There's his nice home ready and waiting to receive you,—and where else can you go? You can say you're sorry, can't you, Sam? 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' Wonderful words, Sam,—wonderful, don't you think? Can't you bring yourself to say them?"

"Sure," Sam agreed.

"Well, now, that's splendid! I'll tell him at once you've repented and that you're ready to throw yourself upon God's mercy and implore His forgiveness. I know how delighted he will be. 'There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons which need not repentance.' That's another wonderful thought, isn't it, Sam? Just as you are gladdening the hearts of your uncle and aunt by saying you're sorry, so you're bringing joy to all the hosts of heaven."

Jerry Haines came to see the invalid, too. Sam smiled wanly when he saw the young Irishman's grinning pleasant face; he appeared strange and funny-looking in his neat street clothes and stiff collar. Haines brought with him the same atmosphere of energy and briskness that the sick man found vaguely so exhausting. He was full of gossip about Hartshone & Faber. Affairs down at the stock-room were getting along in first-class shape; Farley was doing Sam's work and they had taken in another young fellow to help Farley. But Sam wasn't to worry about his job. Mr. Faber had told Jerry to tell him that his salesman's position was ready and waiting for him whenever he felt able to return to work.

Sam nodded and smiled a pretended appreciation, but it was all unimportant to him. He didn't care whether his uncle took him back into his home or not, he didn't care whether or not Mr. Wright and his flock of protégés arranged a welcoming dinner for him, or Mr. Faber held a position for him. All plans filled him with intense boredom. The future held no alluring prospect; the thought of effort wearied him; he shrank from picking up the burden of life. He was still very weak.

§ 4

It was decided that he was to be moved to his uncle's house without further delay, and toward the end of his fifth week at the hospital, Mr. Wright called for him in a four-wheeled cab. He brought with him from the Christopher Street room one of the old battered valises containing some of Sam's clothing. The rest of the young man's effects had been gathered together and taken to his old home, and Mr. Wright suggested, with Sam's indifferent approval, to store in the basement of the Sixteenth Street house the few pieces of furniture which he and Evelyn had had such joy in buying.

"Better let me handle everything, my dear boy," Mr. Wright urged. "It will only distress you to go back there and be reminded of that past sad chapter. Memories—memories! How poignantly harrowing they can sometimes be! Let me save you what I can, Sam. I'll see to everything."

So it was arranged, and one morning early in May when the hot moist breath of early summer lay upon the city, Sam listlessly pulled on his baggy unfamiliar clothes, and with Mr. Wright's arm supporting him, bade good-bye to the Sisters and made a shaky progress downstairs to the waiting vehicle below. Half an hour later he found himself back in his old bed on the top floor of his uncle's house with the familiar pine furniture around the walls, and the sloping discolored ceiling directly overhead with its yellow-brown spots that always resembled, he remembered, a grotesque, oddly shaped fish.

CHAPTER XV

§ 1

His strength flirted with him; it refused to come back. He was conscious of no rebellion; he felt satisfied to lie in bed forever, only asking that no more strenuous effort be demanded of him.

During the first week, his aunt made a point of visiting him during the day, and sometimes in the evening, too, she would climb the stairs to look in upon him. Sam grew to dread these appearances for she was bent upon asking questions, and answering them exhausted him. He pretended to be asleep when he heard her coming, and if she chose a time for her visit when he was unable to simulate slumber, he would allow his eyelids to flutter slowly shut and affect a steady even breathing.

It was apparent to him that Aunt Sarah wished to "wrestle for his soul" and Sam felt he no longer had a soul. Evelyn had taken it. He characterized her in his thoughts as an empty shell; he considered himself another. No longer had he either heart or soul, only a sickly animation remained which people insisted upon calling life.

His aunt was both baffled and irritated by his apathy.

"I declare, Samuel," she said to him one day with a touch of exasperation in her voice, "the way you act, one would suppose you preferred to be left by yourself! The minute I come up here, you go off to sleep. I believe you'd rather not have me come!"

Smiling vaguely under drooping lids, Sam made no comment, and presently, with ill-concealed annoyance, she took herself away.

As time went on, her visits grew to be fewer and farther between, and at last whole days went by when she did not appear at all. She instructed Ruth to tell him the stairs troubled her heart.

Except on Sundays and Wednesdays, when church services claimed him, Uncle Cyrus came to him in the evenings, establishing himself in a creaking rocking-chair next the bed, and after inquiring carefully as to his nephew's state of health, conversed about the weather, politics, business, and, occasionally, church affairs. Sam liked his uncle; his rambling observations soothed him. He believed Uncle Cyrus genuinely loved him, and the thought drew him to the man in spite of the fact that he knew him to be narrow and bigoted. At least his uncle was honest in his convictions and, to the best of his ability, tried to live up to them. There was nothing hypocritical about Uncle Cyrus's Christianity. His nephew respected him.

Mr. Wright and Taylor Evans generally dropped in during the afternoons. The former discoursed cheerfully and optimistically on subjects that interested himself, and neither left silences nor expected Sam to fill them. Taylor brought the manuscript of his novel along with him, and read aloud from it on each visit. The story pleasantly interested Sam.

It was Ruth whose presence in his room pleased him best. She brought up a tray three times a day and the care she invariably took in arranging it amused and touched him. He felt that Ruth really liked taking care of him, and he had no hesitation in asking her to perform small services. He enjoyed hearing her fussing about the room, cleaning it, running the carpet-sweeper over the worn rug, dusting the flooring next the wall with a cloth tied over her broom. She propped up his pillows for him and brought him the morning paper. Ruth was an excellent nurse; she never forgot to give the beef and iron or the medicine when it was time to take either. Nor did she address him unnecessarily, for she possessed the faculty of sensing his needs often before he was aware of them himself. Aunt Sarah thought the young girl spent far too much time in the invalid's room, and frequently cut short her visits by coming to the foot of the stairs below and calling up to her.

"You've been up there long enough, now, Ruth. I need you down here." Or it might be more peremptory. "What's taking you so long up there this morning, Ruth. I declare you spend more time cleaning Sam's room than you do all the rest of the house together."

Occasionally, curiosity would induce her to climb the stairs and enter the room with a suspicious glance.

"Aren't you about done in here, Ruth?" she would ask.

"You've been upstairs since nine o'clock. I don't see the necessity for keeping Sam's room so immaculately clean. There's plenty of work for you downstairs."

Sam's eyes would turn towards the girl from the news sheet he might be reading. Sometimes their glances met and there would be a covert look of amused understanding. Both knew what it was that troubled their aunt, though they never put the thought into words. Aunt Sarah regarded her nephew as still stained with sin; he had lived in adultery with a woman of the streets and the devil had branded him with his mark. He was a dangerous young man; she did not fancy the idea of her niece being alone in the room with him,—particularly a bedroom.

Ruth, Sam suspected, shared some of her aunt's feelings concerning him, and looked upon him doubtfully although perhaps with no downright censure. He was aware she watched him curiously at times, her round solemn eyes fixed upon him, speculating, he imagined, on the awful circumstances of his sinful life. It annoyed him that she should think harshly, even disapprovingly of him. Knowing so little of life, it was natural she should regard his relations with Evelyn as discreditable. No doubt she prayed for him. He did not like the thought of her praying for him, supplicating God to redeem him! There was a sweet air of purity about Ruth; he suspected she had been greatly distressed in thinking of him during the past year.

Sometimes when Aunt Sarah was out of the house and Sam was alone, Ruth would bring a lapful of sewing up to his room, and sit by the window silently bending over her work, her needle busy. Sam liked to have her there, enjoyed the silent companionship, and it pleased him that she should want to come. June had turned out a wet, dreary month, and the continued steady downpour of rain, the roar of the pounding deluge upon the tin roof directly over his head, affected his nerves. When Ruth was in the room, it did not trouble him so much.

During one of these dark, sluicing afternoons, he lazily opened his eyes and caught her watching him. There was a funeral service in the church at four o'clock that day—the wife of one of the Elders—and Aunt Sarah had been obliged to attend. Ruth had come up as soon as her aunt departed and had been working industriously at the window for some time.

Sam smiled a lazy recognition of her study. Slightly confused, she immediately turned her eyes back to her work. After a while, Sam said:

"Do you think I'm awfully wicked, Ruth?"

She bent closer over her sewing and there was silence.

"Ruth,—I'd really like to know what you think of me."

"You know," he went on when there was still no answer, "I hate having you believe rotten things about me. You've heard Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah talking about me and how wicked I was to live with a girl who wasn't my wife, and of course you think about me the way they do. There's always two sides of a story, Ruth,—and I'd like to tell you mine, if you don't mind. Would you like to hear it?"

He could see the silhouette of her head against the window; her eyes were very close to her work and her needle was weaving minutely.

"Would you?" he insisted.

"It's just as you feel about it, Sam." Her voice was hardly audible.

"Well, I think it would help me to talk about it, and, anyhow, I'd like to have you know the truth."

He began to tell her about Evelyn, from the time of her desertion by the actor who had made a pretense of marrying her, to the day of his own and her desperate need of each other and their decision to take their love and destinies into their hands and in defiance of convention, try to make something permanent and good out of their union.

"The fates were all against us, I'm afraid," he went on in a depressed voice as he reviewed the struggle. "I didn't have money enough; that was all the trouble. If I had had money we could have worked it out. I could have gone to a lawyer and arranged to have the illegality of that marriage established and then we could have been married and begun our life together right. If there had been money enough we could have had a decent home and a little luxury and perhaps a servant, and then nobody would have blamed us. People would have said we had done a very plucky thing. But Ev' couldn't stick it; if she'd waited twenty-four hours longer we might have pulled through, I believe. I came home with the news that Mr. Faber was going to put me on the road, and—and she'd gone! She went back to her friends; somebody had agreed to finance a friend of hers in a show, and gave her a

part in the chorus. I guess that meant more to her than I did. I don't blame her. No, I really don't. She'd had a hard time of it, harder than anybody will ever know, and it was just too much for her. It would have been too much for any girl,—and she wasn't very strong. I couldn't have stood it, if I hadn't loved her so much. We didn't have money for clothes or theaters or anything,—and Ev' had been used to all these things. She liked having good times and we couldn't afford them. Sometimes there wasn't quite enough money for the food we needed. And she had to do all the cooking and—and she was lonesome. That was a large part of the trouble: she got terribly lonely. She was used to a lot of friends, and being down there on Christopher Street with just me wasn't very much fun. I was away at work all day and she didn't have anything to amuse her. She tried to get a job herself—but she wasn't strong enough. She was a little bit of a thing, pale, and kind of anemic . . ."

His voice trembled a moment but he caught himself up, clicking shut his jaws to check the choke in his throat.

"I tell you, Ruth," he continued after a pause and now there was fierceness in his tone, "there would have been a different ending to our story if I had had a decent salary—if I had only had a little more money. That's all that matters in this world is money! Just money—money—money. If you have it, you're noble and good; if you haven't you're no better than an outcast and nobody cares a darn about you. If I ever get well, I'm going after money—heaps of it,—and I'm going to be rich,—awfully rich."

He lay staring up at the distorted, grotesque fish upon the ceiling, losing himself in his reflections. A matter of dollars and cents had separated him and Evelyn, had ruined his life, and sent her back to her frivolous companions, to the shame and degradation which must inevitably follow. It was that thought which turned the knife in his heart and made him cover his shut eyes with the back of his wrist and strike it against them in anguish.

He opened them presently, blinked, and sighed heavily. Ruth still bent over her work, but he saw her fingers were still now, one hand lay upon the other, and as he looked, he saw tears upon her cheeks. She raised a hand and brushed them away furtively.

"Ruth!"

She shook her head hastily, winking her eyes, and turning her face from him.

"Well-l,—that's how it was," said Sam slowly. "I tried to do something for her, and she did a lot for me. We didn't injure anyone and I can't see how our living together and trying to make a marriage out of it can be considered sin. I don't much care what my uncle and aunt think about me; they couldn't and wouldn't understand, but I wish you wouldn't be down on me. You've never been in love, Ruth, but when you are, think of me, and you'll understand. There isn't any explanation for the way you feel when you're in love,—there's no good reason for it or anything,—but when you meet the person you're crazy about, be she good or bad, it doesn't make any difference,—you love her and life isn't worth living without her. . . . That's why I wish to God they'd let me die."

He could hear Ruth frankly crying now. Twisting his head, he could see her trying to cover her eyes. It came to him he was foolishly, unnecessarily distressing her.

"I'm sorry I told you all about it if it's going to make you feel badly. There isn't anything to feel badly about. It's all over and done with. Evelyn didn't really care for me, that was the trouble,—and perhaps I'm better off without her. . . . Ruth, please don't go on so. . . . Ruth, please don't feel so badly."

The girl suddenly rose to her feet, catching her sewing in both arms, holding it to her breast, and with wet cheeks and quivering breath she hurried from the room.

"Ruth, don't go! . . . Ruth, I'm sorry!"

She was gone.

He lay wondering at her emotion and then took to dreaming of the past, till presently he heard the door-bell ring and Meggs heavily thumping up the cellar stairs. A moment or two later, puffing and blowing, Mr. Wright breezily entered the room, rubbing together his large fat hands.

"Well, how's the sick person to-day?" he demanded cheerily. "We missed you last night, Sam, my boy. All the fellows were asking for you. They want to know when they can have a feast for the prodigal son, a slaughtering of the fatted calf. 'For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' Comforting words,—don't you think?"

§ 2

Sam did not see Ruth again until the next day when she brought up his breakfast tray as usual. He looked at her, but she avoided his glance. He wondered if she was angry or if he had offended her. . . . Poor little Ruth! He always thought of her as "poor little Ruth." It moved him to think she was concerned about him.

The early mail brought him a shock in the shape of a letter from Evelyn. Addressed to the Christopher Street number, it had been forwarded by the post-office. It was three pages of her scrawled untidy writing and bore on each sheet the faded lithographic name and picture of a cheap hotel in Kansas City. She wrote she was continually thinking of him, wondering if he was angry with her and whether he was ever going to forgive her; she loved him, she assured him with underscored words, better than ever and was true to him; life on the road was terribly hard; they had been promised there wasn't going to be any one-night stands and the whole trip had been practically little else; she guessed they'd "stick it a week" in Kansas City, but she was so tired and miserable and she longed for him and missed the room on Christopher Street; wouldn't he send her a line and tell her he wasn't angry with her and that he wanted her to come back? She gave him the address of a theater in Denver,—care of "The Belle of the Bowery Company."

Conflicting emotions tore at his heart. It stirred him that she should want him; he longed to believe she was faithful to him, but in spite of her vehement assertions the doubt was not dispelled. He was sorry for her, realizing how ill-equipped she was, physically, for the gruelling demands of life on the road; he found satisfaction in the thought she was unhappy and had begun to appreciate what she had thrown away; he bitterly hoped more hardship and loneliness were in store for her, and yet with this very thought, he longed to save her from them, to fly to her side, take her in his arms, and carry her off from the cheap and depraved associations he despised. One moment he mistrusted, almost hated her; the next, love tortured him. It never entered his mind to write her as she begged.

Ruth came to carry his luncheon tray below. Suddenly, upon an impulse, he said to her:

"I had a letter from Evelyn to-day."

Crimson flooded the girl's dark olive cheeks.

"I'd like to have you read it." He wondered at his wanting her to read what Evelyn had written, but the ache in his breast hungered for sympathy. She drew back from the bed, with a frightened frown.

"Oh, please, Ruth. I need your help; I've got to have somebody's."

With a quick motion he drew the envelope from beneath his pillow and tossed it upon the tray.

"Go on, read it," he urged. "Read it to-night and we can talk it over to-morrow."

She hesitated a moment more, then turned and carried the tray and letter from the room.

§ 3

He found it on his breakfast tray the following morning.

"Did you read it?" he asked. She nodded and went to the windows where she pretended to occupy herself in adjusting the shades.

"I don't know why I should bother you with my troubles," he said. "I see they distress you and I daresay it's rather thoughtless and selfish of me. But there is no one else I can talk to about them and—I don't know, Ruth,—you seem so loyal and to have such sense."

He could wring no comment from her; she was embarrassed and silent. He felt that somehow he must break through her reticence; there was no justification for it. When she came back later in the day to tidy his room, he mentioned the subject again.

"Hang it all, Ruth! What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Yes, there is, too. You've been acting awfully funny ever since the other afternoon." He went on explaining his motives in confiding in her.

"It's the morning for the doctor's visit," she reminded him; "I want to get through in here before he comes."

She baffled him by her evasiveness.

A day passed before another opportunity came to speak to her. Dr. Sitgraves had urged Sam to exert himself, telling him that his distaste for effort was only mental, assuring him that

if he bestirred himself, his strength would begin to return. His uncle and aunt had at once so strongly endorsed this advice, that Sam knew they considered it high time he was getting on his feet again.

The morning after the doctor's visit he was weak and panting but fully clothed in the rocking-chair beside the open window. The June rain had given place to a warm humidity and he was conscious of sweaty palms and moisture about his lips. It was thus Ruth found him when she came in a little after nine to clean his room, and it was then he spoke to her once more of Evelyn's letter.

"You've not told me yet what you thought of it."

She answered with visible effort.

"What is there to say?"

"Well-l . . ." For a moment he was at a loss. "You must have thought something! You know she's not much of a letter-writer. I don't suppose you could get much of an idea of Ev' from a letter like that. She doesn't express herself very well—and her handwriting's terrible. . . . She never had a chance at much education—out there in Grand Island. . . ."

He paused, thinking how pitifully small was the opportunity for a girl born in a little prairie town like Grand Island. Her father, she had told him, had been one of the pioneers, sent there as shop-foreman by the Union Pacific Railroad in '66. Sam turned to look at Ruth's serious face. It occurred to him it was impossible for her, raised so differently, to conceive of such a character as Evelyn. He was about to say so, when in a low voice she asked:

"And will you do—as—as she suggests?"

"How do you mean?"

"Write that you forgive her?"

He stared, the thought arresting him. Except for the occasional sound of Ruth's knuckles against the woodwork of the bed as she tucked the bed-clothes in around its sides, there was stillness in the room. Sam's thoughts busily wheeled. . . . Write Evelyn? . . . Should he? . . .

"No," he said at length, thinking aloud. "No, I will not write her; it's all over between us. I struggled hard to make something of our lives together, but I guess it was hopeless. I don't want to go back to it, to try again. Ev' did something to me when she quit me. I gave her everything that was in me and she held something back. It was either that, or she

didn't have much to give,—not as much as I had. It isn't a question of forgiveness. I forgive her all right. The difference is in me; I'm not the same as I was; I don't want to go back. There was something about our little home there. . . . I don't know how to describe it. It stood for what was good to me. I was ready to give all the strength of my body and soul toward maintaining it, and she . . . she *desecrated* it."

Ruth had paused in her work and stood now with one hand on the foot-board of the bed. Her eyes fixed upon him were shining.

"I'm glad," she said simply and turned back to her work.

"Glad, Ruth? Why?"

He got no answer for at that moment came a summons from below.

"Ruthie,—what in the world are you *doing* up there? I'm waiting, my dear, for you to help me. There's lots of other cleaning to be done in the rest of the house this morning."

"Yes, Aunt Sarah, I'm just finished." At once she gathered up sweeper, broom, and dusters, and hurried downstairs.

§ 4

Sam's convalescence began to be wearily trying not only to himself but to everyone else in his uncle's house, and his own realization of the fact did not help matters. Dr. Sitgraves admitted frankly he was puzzled. The smallest exertion would cause an unaccountable sweat that sapped the strength which rest and careful nourishment were building up. Sam began to hate having people—particularly Ruth—wait upon him. One day he determined without assistance to reach the dining-room in the basement in time for lunch, but he got no further than the bottom of the second flight of stairs and was obliged to spend the rest of the afternoon on his uncle's bed until Mr. Wright arrived to carry him with Meggs' assistance back to his own room. His helplessness humiliated him; he felt himself a burden.

Ruth, coming to sit with him the next day, while her aunt attended the quarterly meeting of the Doctor's Daughters in the Sunday-school Parlors, found him in deep dejection. It was little better than death in life that Sam felt he was enduring. And told her so, cursing himself for his weakness.

In sympathy she bent over him to push back his thick black hair from his forehead with her finger-tips and continued to touch it gently.

The contact soothed him and he closed his eyes contentedly. "Oh—that feels good," he murmured.

She was leaning over the bed in an awkward attitude.

"Sit down here," he urged, and put out an arm to draw her to a sitting posture beside him. His hand caught her fingers and rested in her lap. Presently, when she ceased stroking his forehead, he felt her other hand touch his. For a long time he lay so with shut lids, conscious of a vague comfort in her proximity and liking the touch of her firm cool fingers. Perhaps he dozed a moment; afterwards he could not remember. He opened his eyes to smile sleepily at her and widened them in surprise when he discovered her own to be glistening wet, and as he looked they suddenly filled and brimmed over. One of her hands flew to check her tears, she strove to disengage the other and rise, but Sam tightened his grasp on her fingers.

"Ruth! . . . Why, Ruth! . . . What on earth's the matter?"

In that instant the truth flashed upon him. He stared at her, struck and awed, but in the same moment she knew she had betrayed herself, and pulled her hand free, emotion shaking her, as she struggled to her feet.

Sam reached out to hold her, determined she should not leave him.

"Don't go, Ruth!" he commanded; "you *mustn't* go! We've got to talk this thing out. . . . Ruth, I tell you if you leave me, I'll—I'll do something desperate! I warn you!"

His answer was the sound of her quick run descending the stairs, and the final sharp shutting of another door below. Then silence,—a dead, blank silence that permeated the whole house.

Sam lay still, a frown between his brows, his thoughts spinning! Ruth! . . . Poor little Ruth! . . . It seemed preposterous! . . . He could not credit the discovery of her love. How hard it must have been for her! He thought of Evelyn. Ruth must have suffered deeply during the time he was living with her. There had followed the hospital and he had been expected to die. Then they had brought him home and had left her to take care of him!

Ruth in love with him! Ever back to that thought his

troubled mind reverted. He put it from him, rejecting it impatiently, telling himself it must be a mistake. A thousand bits of evidence flashed immediately before him to assure him it was not. Poor Ruth! . . . Poor little Ruth!

That evening Meggs brought him up his supper. Miss Ruth, the butler reported, was not feeling "extra good" and had kept her room. Sam had had the news from his aunt at an earlier hour. She had paid him a brief and winded call shortly after her return from the quarterly meeting.

"Ruthie's got a wretched headache, poor child," she had informed him. "I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if she had too much to do."

§ 5

It was this last remark of his aunt that determined Sam to remove himself as soon as possible to his sister's house in Framingham. For the first time since his illness, desire came to him to get well. He confided his thought to Dr. Sitgraves when the physician called.

"I must get out of here, Doc," he told him. "I'm causing a lot of trouble and I don't think I'll ever get my strength as long as I stay here. Don't you think a change to the country will do me good?"

"It's just a question of your being able to stand the trip," the physician said. "Get some strength and some flesh upon your bones, and I'll send you up there in double-quick order."

Sam set himself resolutely to the business of getting well; he gulped down glass after glass of the milk he had grown to hate, forced himself to eat, and exerted himself each day to more and more activity.

He inquired about Ruth, sent her verbal messages and at last a friendly note, but it was two or three days before he saw her again. She had an unusually high color when she entered his room, there was a set expression about her mouth and her eyes studiously avoided his. Pity and sympathy for her weighed heavily upon him.

"Ruth dear,"—his tone was entreating,—"I'm going up to Framingham just as soon as I'm able. The doctor says I may. It's an awful bother, I know, taking care of me; Aunt Sarah says you're doing a great deal too much, and your strength isn't equal to it. . . ."

After that, their remarks to one another were infrequent and perfunctory; the old intimacy and comradeship seemed abruptly to have come to an end. He felt he had lost a friend, that he was in the way, that nobody wanted him at his uncle's house, and he longed desperately to be off.

CHAPTER XVI

§ 1

It was a great joy to find Narcissa waiting for him among the little group of people at the station a fortnight later when slowly and with a steadying grasp of the gritty hand-rail of the car, he descended from the Boston train. It was two years since he had seen her, and her plumpness, splendid vitality, and bloom surprised and delighted him. He noted the quick change in her expresson when in turn she beheld his pallid sunken cheeks. But he now knew himself to be on the road to recovery and he could meet her alarmed look with a smile. She seized his heavy valise in a strong, capable hand, and with an arm about him, led him around to the other side of the station where her horse and surrey were waiting. On the front seat was a three-year-old, solemn-eyed, fat, little girl, with large china-blue eyes, red, bulging cheeks and a mass of tight yellow curls close to her head. She was complacently contemplating the scene about her, and turned her round orbs upon Sam as he approached, and observed him stolidly.

"Not Mary?" exclaimed Sam.

"Yes, indeed," laughed the proud mother, "and what's more, Sam dear," she added bending a little closer, "I hope there'll be a brother for her to play with by the end of the year."

"Don't tell me! Are you glad, Narciss'?"

"Oh, yes,—very glad. . . . I want children. We . . . I need them."

There was a note of sadness in her last words, Sam thought, but a glance at her face revealed only a radiant smile. He noted with pleasure her round neck and firm arms, bare to the elbows, a smooth brown tan; her hips were broad, her bosom ample, the arch of her chest high, and marked with a bright red square, where the opening of her Dutch gingham left it exposed to the sun.

"It's glorious to have you here," she said with feeling, helping him as he clambered into the vehicle. "Phineas couldn't come down. He's awfully busy; he had to drive over to Milford and said you'd be sure to understand. . . . Here, I'll put Mary between us and the bag in the back."

The gray road, velvety with thick dust, bordered with dust-laden trees and crumbling stone walls, the hazy, humid heat, were beguiling and restful. Sam breathed deep of the country smells,—hay and tilled soil and farm-yards. Peace came upon him soothingly; the country was so still, fragrant, and tranquil after the city. Memories of childhood and boyhood came pressing back upon him, old sensations revived. Already it seemed to him, New York and all the teeming, furious bustle of the place was far away. His life with Evelyn, associations connected with his uncle and his home, Hartshone & Faber, belonged to some other entity than his. He was Sam Smith of Mendon again,—old Theophilus Smith's son.

It was good to be jogging along the hot, shady road, beside his buxom, buoyant sister so full of animation and high spirits, and her fat, beautiful, silent, little girl. Sam recalled the time he had said good-bye to Narcissa four years before. What a farm-boy, a greenhorn he had been then, clad in a ten-dollar suit, his hair cut for the first time, wearing the high starched collar that had galled his neck, the tight shoes, and the derby hat! He smiled, ashamed of the memory.

Narcissa was bubbling with news as the surrey creaked and jolted along behind the ambling horse. Phineas was well, Aunt Lucretia,—old Mrs. Hornpipe,—was well, they *all* were well. Phineas was wrapped up in his business, he was doing splendidly; there was another branch store now at Holliston, and he was talking about putting one in Northbridge. Almost all of his buying he attended to now himself in Boston, and he found it necessary to go there once or twice a week. In February, Narcissa had accompained him and for three days they had lived in grand style at the Parker House. She had seen Julia, and Julia—what did Sam think!—Julia was going to be married! Yes, sir; she was going to take unto herself a husband and a very good one, too. He was a wealthy brewer, a widower without any children. Had Sam ever heard of Mr. Patrick B. Brennan? He surely had heard of Brennan's Pale Ale? Well, that was the same person. Julia, it appeared, had had quite a romance. Did Sam remember Karl Schlegel, the

principal of the Milford school who had been "sweet" on Julia, and had been the one to urge her to apply for a position in the Boston public schools? Well, they had been keeping up a very intimate correspondence all these years, and some time ago, when Mr. Schlegel lost his wife, he had gone to Boston, obtained an office position there, and had begged Julia to marry him. His salary, however, wasn't much, he still had two daughters to support,—the boy was working in Springfield,—and Julia had been afraid. Then along had come Mr. Pat Brennan and poor Karl Schlegel had received a definite "No." Julia and Mr. Brennan were to be married in a few weeks and they were going immediately to Europe for their honeymoon. Julia had a perfectly wonderful life before her!

"Well-l," Sam observed, considering his older sister's fortunes, "I hope she'll be happy."

"Oh, she'll be happy all right; Mr. Brennan's a very rich man. He's worth,—oh, I don't know!—*scads* of money!"

"Does she really like him? How old is he?"

"He's fifty, I should guess, but then, remember, Julia's thirty-five!"

"I think she *does* like him," Narcissa continued after a moment, "but I honestly think she still loves Karl Schlegel."

"Humph," Sam sniffed, "at least it will be a distinction having a brewer in the family. Phineas, I suppose," he added dryly, "will handle his brand of beer and ale in future."

His sarcasm made little impression upon his sister, who answered quite seriously:

"Oh, yes; they made a very good deal together, I believe. Mr. Brennan makes soda, bottled lemonade, sarsaparilla, and a lot of other kinds of those fizzy things, besides his beer and ale. Phineas is going to sell his goods exclusively in future. He has hopes Mr. Brennan will help finance him in a big scheme he has in mind."

They had arrived at the Holliday home, and the surrey turned in at the open gate of the white picket fence, and its wheels crunched upon the fine gravel of the road-bed as the horse drew it up the slight grade to the steps of the front porch.

"You've put on quite an addition," Sam remarked, viewing the building.

"Yes, that's Aunt Lucretia's part of the house. We built a little sitting-room there for her, and a bedroom and bath.

She's quite comfortable now, and we needed the room upstairs."

"Do you remember the night you and I drove up here from Mendon in the old sleigh when I wanted to persuade Phineas to back our candy scheme?"

"Oh, don't I! Phineas says it was that night he fell in love with me." His sister smiled a bit self-consciously, and Sam was impelled to kiss her; he thought her charming.

"It's marvelous to have you here, Sammy," she said affectionately, rubbing her cheek against his shoulder. "I get awfully lonesome sometimes. If it wasn't for Mary," she added with a loving glance at the child, "I think there'd be times when I'd go crazy or go off somewhere and never come back."

§ 2

There began for Sam weeks of pleasant idleness in which an unmarred felicity, an even tenor of existence, soothed his spirit, and brought strength and health flooding back. Daily during the first fortnight, he felt his old zest for living steadily returning. It was a delight to wake in the mornings, a pleasure to think of breakfast, a satisfaction to anticipate a whole day of chatting and idling with Narcissa. He would hear her moving about her house-work as sleep drifted away from him, hear her singing, calling to Mary, ascending or descending the creaking stairs. The fragrance of sun-baked roofs, of orchards and honeysuckle would creep in upon him through the open window beside his bed; the hum of bees in the vines, the clinking of milk-cans in a rattling vehicle passing in the dusty road, the sleepy clucking of the hens in the yard, and the half-hearted crowing of a cock brought back old and half-forgotten sensations of his boyhood. Smiling and with a light heart, he would leisurely dress and shave, calling a morning greeting to his sister as he went to or from the bath-room at the end of the hall. In the course of an hour, he would be in the dining-room where Narcissa would bring him a bounteous meal which she insisted on serving with her own hands, although there was a capable, strong-armed country girl in the kitchen. Mary would come toddling to him, and bump herself against his knee, begging bits from his breakfast plate when her mother's attention was elsewhere. Aunt Lucretia, her false dark hair in tight

flat curls on her papery white forehead, would bend upon him kindly twinkling sharp eyes from behind metal-rimmed spectacles. About ten o'clock, Narcissa and Sam, with Mary tucked between them, would make an excursion in the surrey to the shopping district of the town, and the day's marketing would be leisurely dispatched, the morning mail collected, packages and parcels stowed in the back seat; then easily and comfortably, the old horse at a lagging gait, brother and sister would idle homeward, talking, talking, talking.

Sam told Narcissa about Evelyn, and, in this second recital of the story, he was conscious of little of the emotion he had experienced when recounting it to Ruth. He seemed detached from it now,—it was a history that no longer involved him. Alone, sitting in the shade of the honeysuckle on the front porch, as he often did in the afternoons, his book resting in his lap, or when in bed at night, just after he had extinguished the lamp, the thought of Evelyn would sometimes come to him and he would feel again the old pull and hunger in his heart. But talking of her to his sister, he could do so without a tremor or a sensation of the emotion that had once shaken him.

It was with considerable more hesitation that he spoke to Narcissa of Ruth.

"I'm very fond of her," he hastened to explain; "I'm *extremely* fond of her and I wouldn't hurt her for anything in the world. I've never made—what you might call 'love' to her,—have never flirted with her, or held her hand or anything of that sort; there's been no sentimental exchanges between us of any kind. I've always regarded Ruth as a nice kid; she's companionable and sweet, and she has a truly lovely nature,—but I've never thought of her, even remotely, as a—well, a sweetheart. I feel rotten about it. I don't know what the deuce I can do!"

His sister made light of the matter. It was not his fault that the girl had fallen in love with him; if he had not encouraged her, she had no one to blame but herself.

"I don't wonder at her coming to care for you, Sam," Narcissa said; "you're getting really good-looking,—do you know that?"

When he smiled amiably, she went on firmly:

"No, I mean it. As you get older and look less like an overgrown boy, you're becoming downright handsome!"

"Oh, come off!"

"Well,—laugh if you like, but I tell you it's a fact. Old Mrs. Mulligan stopped me in the street day before yesterday and spoke of it, and Fred Bass in the fish market said the same thing. I don't blame Ruth for coming to care for you at all; only I think she's an awful goose to let you know about it."

He gave an impatient jerk of his head.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed, "—excuse me, Sis, I'm sorry,—but it does make me mad to think of her bothering about me. I don't know what to do. When I go back to New York, I'll have to put up at Uncle Cyrus's house again, and it doesn't seem exactly right to Ruth."

"Don't trouble yourself; Ruth'll get over it. . . . Did it ever occur to you to marry Ruth? From what you tell me, and from what I've heard about her, she'd make a nice wife."

"What—Ruth? Marry Ruth? You must be joking!" The idea amused him with its absurdity. "She wouldn't have me—wouldn't think of it for a minute!"

"Why, you big silly! She's in love with you. My dear Sam, she'd jump into your arms."

"Well-l . . ." Her brother shrugged his shoulders and frowned. "There's no likelihood of that. I'm very fond of Ruth, but I don't think I'd like her very much as a wife. She's not my style, and I'm certainly not hers."

§ 3

During the two months he was in Framingham, he did a good deal of reading. He found a number of his father's books in Narcissa's library, and his favorite spot in the warm, drowsy afternoons, was behind the honeysuckle on the front porch, comfortably established in a dilapidated wicker rocker, a volume of Pope's poetry or one of Shakespeare's plays spread open in his hands. He read in desultory fashion, nodding occasionally, roused from his naps by the creaking and jouncing of passing vehicles. The evenings were spent about the lamp-lit round table in the parlor, in strolls along the road or across the fields, scented with evening smells, his arm linked with Narcissa's.

Of his brother-in-law he saw not half as much as he wished. Phineas was now a man of thirty-three or four. He was lean, with deep lines on either side his mouth; his cheeks fell in,

and a few thin locks of fine light hair that grew from the center of his dome-like forehead covered the top of his otherwise bald head. His eyes were sharp and keen, their corners etched with many crinkling wrinkles. He had a likable, pleasant face, although somewhat worried and preoccupied at times, and carried about him an air of important affairs. His three stores demanded a great deal of his time and attention; he had managers in charge of each and part of his days was spent in a buck-board wagon equipped with rubber-tired wheels drawn by a handsome pair of fast trotters which carried him swiftly from Framingham to Holliston, to Milford and back again. His mind was centered just at the moment on opening another general merchandise store at Northbridge or Grafton so that his round of visits would complete a circle. Sam discovered that Phineas owned one or two pieces of good real estate in Milford and his store in Framingham was situated in an imposing two-story brick building which he had built on an important corner of Waverly Street. Above the store were dentists' parlors, the offices of a law firm, and quarters of the Odd Fellows Lodge. He spoke with pride of the chain of Holliday stores, and predicted a time when they would extend clear from Worcester to Boston. Phineas had all the ear-marks of a successful man and Sam felt certain that a big future awaited him.

"How about Mendon?" Sam asked him one day. "Why don't you put a branch store there?"

"Mendon's as dead as the day your father moved there," Phineas told him. "Agriculture 'round here is a played-out game. The cotton mills and factories are the hope of these Massachusetts towns. You keep your eye on places like Milford and Framingham, Sam. I calculate they're going to double in size, the next ten years. They're talking about putting a suburban trolley through here one of these days and if they do . . ."

He left the sentence unfinished, but his keen eyes snapped. Sam looked upon his sister's husband with frank admiration. Phineas's activity in business affairs, the largeness of his dealings, his capacity for making money, his ability to outguess and out-engineer the other fellow, his far-sightedness, all stirred Sam's ambition. He longed to be like him; he felt he had it in him to follow in his footsteps, but he saw no opportunity ahead wherein he might prove himself. Phineas from

the hour of Ezra Hornpipe's death had been working for no one but himself. Only a job of salesman for somebody else's goods awaited Sam, but he determined that if ever a chance to launch out for himself came his way, he would seize it.

That his brother-in-law's affairs kept him so much of the time away from home, was a keen regret to Sam. Listening to him discuss business or hinting at plans he was turning over in his mind, inflamed the younger man's imagination. He found Phineas's most casual remarks tremendously stimulating. He was eager to ask questions, eager to learn the other's opinions, eager to hear what had been the day's activities and what the morrow promised. But Phineas rarely come home in time for dinner, often was absent for three or four days at a stretch, and he was gone early each morning before Sam was astir. He treated his wife's brother in friendly fashion, but the latter could see he regarded him still as a boy.

If he felt an enthusiasm for Phineas's business ability, his sister did not share it. Her husband's plans and affairs had no interest for her, his schemes for larger enterprises concerned her not at all; she saw no reason for his insatiable energy. When Sam taxed her with her indifference, she admitted it, drawing a long breath with a tired drop of her shoulders.

"I'm wrong, I suppose," she said, "but there seems so little laughter and joking and taking-of-one's-ease in our lives. There used to be such fun-making and,—I don't know,—lightness and sociability in the old farm-house at Mendon."

"I seem to remember only worry and trouble," Sam remarked.

"Maybe; perhaps I've forgotten it. But Phineas and I have more than enough for what we want, and his business keeps him so much of the time away from home. I've had more fun since you've been here than I've had in the whole of the past two years. Before he built the Holliday block, we used to take drives in the evenings and go visiting, we used to laugh and talk together the way you and I do. Now when he comes home his mind's all on his business; he's thinking about a loan, or a mortgage, or a 'deal.' I declare I shouldn't care if he lost every cent he had!"

Sam was shocked, disapproving.

"What! Why, you don't know what you're talking about, Narciss'," he said with a touch of impatience; "you've forgotten how Ma and Pa used to worry about keeping a roof

over our heads and having enough food for us. It wasn't your particular concern, and that's why, I suppose, it made no impression upon you. But I can tell you, it was different with me. I'd look at Pa sometimes and, I tell you, my heart used to ache for the old man, and Ma—Ma often knew there wasn't enough in the house for the next meal. You wouldn't want anything like that. You wouldn't like it, I can assure you. . . . Why, you've just been rejoicing in telling me how lucky you think Julia is because she's going to marry a rich man. You'd be mighty sorry if she was going to marry Karl Schlegel."

"I know," Narcissa admitted, "but Schlegel is only a clerk on a salary,—it isn't very much either,—and he's got two children to support and he's well past forty."

"Whereas Mr. Brennan is fifty, can take his wife to Europe on their honeymoon and dress her in silks and satins, and give her everything her heart desires."

"That's nothing to do with the way he treats her," Narcissa argued.

"Perhaps not," Sam admitted, "but nobody wants to be poor when they can be rich. They're not honest with themselves if they say so. Phineas is bound to be a successful man and you're going to be very well-to-do, and be able to give Mary and—and the new baby advantages you and I never had."

"Well, perhaps you're right," his sister said with another troubled sigh, "but just the same, I *do* wish Phineas wouldn't work so hard."

§4

One August day, Sam rose early, drove with his brother-in-law as far as Milford, and walked the rest of the way to Mendon, loitering along the familiar roads, visiting the old farmhouse, skirting the wall of the stony pasture and the spot under the willows of Miller's Creek where he had often bathed. He met several acquaintances of his boyhood whose deferential greeting spoke eloquently of the change in himself. In the center of the little village, he found had been erected a monument to those Mendon heroes who had fallen in the Civil War, and he was moved to find his two brothers' names cut into the white stone. His heart was full as he turned his back upon these scenes; he thought sorrowfully of his father and mother;

it seemed to him they had had so little of satisfaction in their lives. His own stretched before him, and he resolved anew to build well for the years that lay ahead. Success! So much depended upon whether or not a man was successful. He saw clearly now that Evelyn would have spelled disaster for him. She was no mate for a man with ambition. A wife was an integral part of her husband's life, and if his was to be one of achievement, then, when he, Sam, was ready to marry, it would perhaps be better to choose with his head rather than his heart. Evelyn was a closed chapter for him; she had hurt him deeply; he was done with her forever.

A few days before, he had had a second letter from her,—this time from San Francisco. The career of "The Belle of the Bowery" Company had ended there in disaster; it had disbanded with salaries for several weeks in arrears. "Dutch" Koenig had appeared from New York, but declined to put any more money in the venture. He had departed on a trip 'round the world, taking Dais' with him. Evelyn was "broke," she was in desperate need, she didn't have any clothes and hardly enough to eat; she was as faithful as ever to him, she meant to continue so till she died. Couldn't he find it in his heart to forgive her and send her a little money? For the present she was filling out in the chorus with Myrtle Flynn in a jay place called Woodward's Gardens. She bemoaned the day she had ever been persuaded to leave him and longed to come back to him. If he could scrape the money together for her railroad fare she'd leave the day it arrived.

"Oh, Sammy-boy,—*dear* Sammy-boy," she wrote, "don't be hard on your old Ev'. She's sorry she done what she did to you, and she prays every day in her heart that you'll forgive her and some day be good to her again. Here's a dozen hugs and kisses from your sorry and loving girl."

And there followed twelve circles containing as many vigorously marked crosses.

Sam smiled grimly when he read the appeal and his expression did not alter as he tore the letter carefully and deliberately into small bits and tossed the heap into a waste-paper basket Her request for money was the last straw in his disillusionment.

The two months he had spent with his sister and brother-in-law had been a time not only of convalescence but of mental readjustment. He had taken stock of himself and a firm determination to make something of his life now fired him.

Whether or not he could make good as a salesman remained to be seen, but he had plenty of confidence in himself and he knew he was better acquainted with Hartshone & Faber's catalogue and their stock than many of the men on the road. He was eager to put himself to the test, and toward the end of August he wrote to Mr. Faber. The answer though reassuring was at the same time, Sam observed, cautious: whenever Smith was sufficiently strong enough to come back to work, he would be given a trial. Sam kissed his sister warmly, took little Mary in his arms, bade her hug him as he pressed his lips to her moist, fragrant neck, left a message of thanks and farewell for Phineas, who was in Boston at the time, and departed.

"Dear old girl," he said as he kissed Narcissa for the last time at the station, "you've been wonderful to me, and I never felt stronger or better in my life. I'll show 'em down there that Sam Smith's a boy to be reckoned with. You'll be proud of me one day, Sis."

CHAPTER XVII

§ 1

During his last few days at Framingham, Sam's thoughts frequently had turned toward Ruth and he had worried as to what his manner should be when he met her. In his innermost consciousness, he realized that the knowledge that she cared for him, drew him to her; but he wanted to be square with Ruth. He admired and respected her too much to be anything less. He knew he was not in love with her, and he was glad he was not. He had no mind for marrying just at present; time enough to think about a wife when he had made "his pile." He had wanted to marry Evelyn, and make a home and perhaps have children, but that was all behind him. Now, his mind was centered upon getting on in the world, upon success and money. Ruth, he decided, must be treated with marked indifference, even perhaps with brusqueness.

But the girl took the character of their relationship into her own hands. She greeted him with an easy friendliness, good comradery, even with an air of gaiety. There was no trace in her manner of the old constraint and diffidence. Her unaffectedness was vaguely disconcerting. He wondered about her. Had she changed in her feelings toward him? Did she no longer care? Had he only imagined, while he had been ill, that she was in love with him?

He was full of enthusiasm upon his return for everybody and everything. He wrung his uncle's hand, kissed his aunt's withered cheek soundly, burst into the kitchen with greetings for Meggs and Marty. New York had lost all its frightening aspect for him; he loved the throngs of people and the tall stately buildings; he rejoiced that he was back among them again; he longed to be a wage-earner and part of the city life once more, bumping and elbowing his way through the teeming streets.

On the very first night of his return he called on Mr.

Wright, bounding up the stairs as soon as the click of the lock in the front door permitted him to enter, and grasping the large fat hand of his surprised friend with warmth and affection.

"Well—well—well, my boy," said Mr. Wright, "so you're back again. I'm delighted to see you. You look splendidly, brown and vigorous with your tanned cheeks and hard muscles, —just like your old self. Country life—country life, that's the tonic for us ailing city folk. A breath of the hay fields is better than the best doctor's prescription. . . . You know Stanford Marsh."

Sam's ardor was somewhat dashed at the sight of Mr. Wright's guest. He had not observed the young man when he entered the room and now discovered him established in a large easy chair, his feet propped upon another, coatless, vestless, sucking through a pair of straws, the dregs of a glass in which ice clinked and rattled. Sam remembered his manner had never been over-cordial to himself, but now Marsh greeted him with a fair show of pleasant friendliness. He had just returned from Paris, he informed Sam, where he had been for several months; he had accompanied the firm's buyer on his spring visit and had remained there looking after certain affairs of his father's business.

"Paris is a great place," he drawled. "I'd like to live there for the rest of my life. . . . How's your pretty cousin?"

Sam reddened and reported she seemed well. He wondered why it was that Marsh always irritated him. He was tempted for the moment to tell him that he and Ruth were engaged.

Mr. Wright showed genuine interest in his inquiries about Sam's recovery, how he had spent his days in Framingham and what were his plans for the future. He nodded approvingly to all the young man's answers.

"You look very fit,—strong as iron," he repeated several times.

"I feel that way," Sam assured him smiling self-consciously.

"So you think you'll go back and try your luck with Hartshone & Faber? They're a good house and there's plenty of opportunity there. I'd better wander down that way tomorrow and, on the pretext of selling the old boy a gross of pen-knives, put in a good word for you." Mr. Wright indulged in one of his knowing chuckles.

"Wait till I see Mr. Faber first," Sam urged hurriedly.

"He wrote me when I was up in Framingham that he'd give me a chance and I'd like to see what I can do for myself."

"That's a fine spirit, Sam, my boy;—don't you think so, Stanford? Stand on your own feet every time. There's something splendid and manly about that. I tell you, Sam, I'm proud of you. You'll succeed,—see if you don't. That's the kind of straightforwardness that counts. 'Be thine own advocate when thy heart and arm are tested.' Wonderful words those; the ancients knew how to put things."

"What do you hear from the fellows?" Sam asked.

"Oh, I have news—good news. A long letter from Jack Cheney only yesterday. He and Madison are living in Berlin together and they think they'll stay there another year. Matt's going in for gynecology and Jack for surgery. They both hope they'll be able to tie up with some big doctor here in New York when they come back."

" 'Way last Christmas, I had a letter from Jack," Sam observed, and with a note of regret in his voice he added: "I never answered it."

"Ah,—you ought to write him," Mr. Wright counseled.

"I wouldn't be a doctor if you paid me," Stanford Marsh observed. "It's a rotten life."

"On the contrary," Mr. Wright disagreed, "I consider it one of the noblest professions. Look at Hippocrates and Pasteur, Darwin and Lister. Lives sacrificed to research, dedicated to study and investigation in order that humanity may be safeguarded from the perils of disease and dissolution. Posterity has acclaimed them to immortality. Our Lord himself was the greatest of all physicians—"

"Well, I think I'll be running along," Sam interrupted. "I promised Taylor I'd look him up."

"Oh, don't go—don't go, Sam," his host urged. "Stay along with us. Stanford and I have promised ourselves a little snack 'bout half-past ten."

But Sam was not to be persuaded. Mr. Wright accompanied him regretfully to the door.

"See you at Bible Class, Sunday?" he queried, his arm about the other's shoulders. "The boys will be delighted to have you back again. We'll give you an ovation."

Sam smiled evasively.

"Well, perhaps," he said, but he had no intention of entering Mr. Wright's Sunday-school Class ever again.

§ 2

He had difficulty in rousing Taylor and when the young man finally came to unbolt the front door, Sam saw that he had been deep in work. His blond hair was rumpled, his shirt open at the throat and an unfamiliar pair of spectacles rode his nose, over the tops of which he peered at the late caller with frankly hostile eyes. But as soon as he recognized Sam, he grabbed him by the forearm and pulled him inside.

"By the glory of Allah!" he exclaimed, "you're just the man I'm looking for."

"You're working," Sam said hesitatingly.

"Bet your life, I'm working," Taylor agreed, "and you're going to help me."

After closing and locking the door, he carried Sam into the crowded little den in the rear of the shop. Here, piled against the walls and stacked in corners, were heaps of second-hand books and tattered files of magazines. The place smelled of old decayed leather, yellowing paper, a foul pipe, and burnt coffee. On one end of a crowded deal table, spotted with ink blots, an untidy manuscript showed where Taylor had been working. On a rusty battered stove, whose casual fire made the room uncomfortably warm, a granite coffee pot simmered and occasionally sputtered its contents from its nozzle upon the hot surface beneath. The sagging bed, covered with a soiled steamer rug, was littered with papers, books, and pipe ashes. At its foot, her paws tucked out of sight, her pointed ears sharp and erect, Pasht gazed at the newcomer from yellow agate eyes.

Taylor swept the cat to the floor and made room for his guest to sit down. He offered a cup of coffee, a pipe full of tobacco, but Sam declined. He preferred, he said, to roll his own cigarettes.

Interested to learn about Taylor's work, he had difficulty in persuading the young author to discuss it.

"Oh, come on, now," Sam urged, "don't be temperamental. This looks like something new," he said referring to the manuscript; "what're you writing about?"

"Well,—it's about you,—in a way," Taylor confessed with a laugh.

"About me!"

"Yep; you and Evelyn."

Suddenly he was eager to explain. For a long time, he said, he had been looking for a plot with big, human "stuff" in it, and one day it had occurred to him that Evelyn's story had all the elements he desired. He had been acquainted with her slightly himself, he had heard Sam talk of her, and he felt he knew her and could write about her with a sure pen.

"Nobody will ever identify her, and if somebody did, I don't suppose it would make very much difference," Taylor said. "You needn't be afraid that you'll be recognized either. I'll change the locality and everything and you can read it over when it's finished and cut out what you don't like. Anyhow, you figure in the story only incidentally. It's Evelyn that interests me. The type of girl she is and the folks she sprang from, and the pitiful chance she had in life to amount to something; I think it ought to make a great yarn. I see her as a little girl out there in Grand Island with everything pioneer and raw and western, her father a railroad shop-foreman, and then her mother dying, her father marrying again and her stepmother being kind to her two sisters and rotten to her, and then her meeting that traveling actor fellow and going off with him thinking he was really going to marry her, and I tell you it's—it's terrific. I'll have to treat the year or two that follows rather gingerly,—just vaguely sketch it in, implying a good deal,—because the public's squeamish. They shy away from truth if it's a bit shocking. Sometimes I wonder how they stand for Shakespeare and Byron and the Bible. At any rate, I believe I can sugar-coat those few months, so that it won't give offense, and then I want to do her life after she comes to live with you very carefully,—only . . ." Taylor interrupted himself at this point to indulge in a brief laugh, "only, I want to keep all the reader's sympathy with her, so it will have to be you that does the deserting! I'll probably make you abandon her in order to marry a rich girl. . . . I don't know,—I'll work it out some way." He fell silent, musing over his story, and Sam considered, too. After a while the latter asked:

"What becomes of her then?"

Taylor shrugged.

"Probably she'll drown herself or turn on the gas. It doesn't make any difference as long as I can make her seem real."

"I'm the scalawag, then?" Sam said.

"Yes, you're to be sacrificed to the demands of art. How does it strike you?"

"Oh, it's all right. I'm sure I haven't any objections to your using it. . . . Only . . ."

"Only what?"

"It isn't true to life after all, is it?"

"But I can *make* it seem true to life," Taylor insisted. "My heroine doesn't have to be the shallow, selfish creature that Evelyn actually is."

He continued to argue the point, his deep voice stumbling over his words in their rapid enunciation.

"Write it any way you see fit," Sam told him. "If you *feel* it convincing, I presume you can make it seem so. How do you want me to help you? You said something about my being able to when I came in."

"Give me all the facts you can about her early life,—everything she ever told you. She must have mentioned a lot of trivial episodes. Tell me anything you can remember. It will help me visualize her upbringing and the atmosphere of her home."

They sat together until long past midnight, Taylor tireless and earnest, scribbling notes, interrupting, begging Sam to repeat, asking question after question.

"I thought I'd call my novel *Tarnished Wings;* it kind of suggests the story, seems to me. Do you think it's a good title?"

Sam made his way home in the early hours of the morning, stirred by his friend's enthusiasm, his mind full of Evelyn and the tragedy of her story. Her true history was so much more poignant than any fancied one. He wondered what she was doing, how she was keeping soul and body together, what would eventually become of her. The picture that suddenly rose before him as he strode along made him shut his eyes an instant with the horror of it. God! Poor old Ev'.

§ 3

The next day was Saturday, and with money he had borrowed from Narcissa, he spent the day purchasing for himself a new wardrobe. He was sorely in need of it. Sunday fol-

lowed and although the thought of church filled him with distaste, he accompanied his uncle, aunt, and Ruth to the morning service. The atmosphere of the place impressed him exactly as he had anticipated. The hymns, the kneeling, the long prayers, struck him as so much mummery; the faces of the congregation, the Elders, even the white-haired eloquent old pastor seemed stamped with hypocrisy. Doctor McIntosh pleaded earnestly with his audience to give generously when the collection was taken up.

His uncle and Ruth remained for the Sunday-school session, but Sam left for home with his aunt. As slowly they made their way together up the crowded aisle and step by step through the hot lobby toward the head of one of the staircases, unexpectedly they came upon Stanford Marsh.

Aunt Sarah at once beamed a recognition.

"Why, Mr. Marsh! How delightful! So you're back again? Well, this is indeed a pleasure! Ruth enjoyed your postals so much."

Marsh murmured something about Paris, and Mrs. Smith immediately took him up.

"Oh, yes, Paris! It must be thrilling over there with all the pictures and the Seine and everything. But I'm sure you're glad to be home again. . . . You know my nephew, of course, Mr. Marsh?"

Sam explained they had met the previous evening. He observed critically how the young man worked his eyebrows as he talked. Every word he uttered was accompanied by an expressive, nervous twitching. He was undeniably handsome in an effeminate way. Sam hated him. He tugged gently at his aunt's arm, hoping to end the interview, but Mrs. Smith was not to be hurried.

"Ruth will be delighted to know you're back," she said more than once. "You must come 'round and tell us all about your stay over there. I've always wanted to go to Paris just to visit the churches, if for nothing else. They must be simply marvelous."

"Yes, they're very beautiful."

"Have you seen Ruth?"

"I was standing here hoping I'd meet her as she came out. I saw her hat from the back of the church. I was late getting in."

"She and Mr. Smith probably went down to Sunday-school

by the Doctor's stairs. They often do that. You'll see her afterwards, I'm sure."

There was a moment's hesitation, and Sam started forward with a nod in Stanford's direction, but his aunt stood firm.

"I say, why couldn't you come over to dinner to-day after Sunday-school is over?" she urged brightly. "You can walk over with Ruth. Just a family dinner, you know,—just like always."

"I have an engagement, Mrs. Smith, but thank you very much."

"Well, how about supper then? Just cold meat, you understand, and some salad. We have the best baked beans Sunday night you ever tasted, though I do say so myself."

Marsh flashed his beautiful white teeth, and with a confused laugh confessed he had an engagement for that hour, too.

"Oh, you popular man!" Aunt Sarah said, flipping her fingers at him with a disapproving pat. "Well, come some time soon, then. You're quite welcome, you know. I'll tell Ruth to bring you 'round for I must hear all about Paris. . . . Good-bye."

Sam guided his aunt down the broad stairway to the street, his hand beneath her elbow. The last of the congregation was filtering out of the edifice, and children were converging from every direction towards its portals. The sidewalk was a congestion of sedately dressed people and primly attired boys and girls; the conflicting streams mingled, impeding progress, small bodies bumping and elbowing their way through the press.

"It does look so pretty to see all the children hurrying to Sunday-school," observed Aunt Sarah. "They're all dressed up in their best clothes and I do love those broad white collars and bright bows the boys are wearing now."

Sam walked along in silence. He was deeply annoyed by his aunt's effusiveness with Stanford Marsh. It seemed an outrageous procedure to him that Ruth should thus be thrust upon him. He knew the young man repelled her. He turned presently upon his aunt with a determined expression.

"I can't for the life of me see what you find to like in that fellow, Aunt Sarah. He's no good, and I think you make Ruth unhappy by encouraging him to pay her attention."

"Tut—tut, Samuel! What a tone to take! Just because you don't like Mr. Marsh, you fancy Ruth doesn't either.

He's a very fine young fellow, he's the son of one of our merchant princes, and he's rich and will inherit a great fortune and a very enviable position. You *know* nothing against him and *have* nothing against him but your personal dislike. That's no reason, and—and you'll make a mistake, I can tell you, if you say a word of criticism about him to Ruth. I don't know as I have a right to say so, but I happen to be aware that Ruth—well, that Ruth is a little touched in that direction. I think the girl was very down at heart all the time Mr. Marsh was away. I'm not wholly in her confidence, of course, but I can tell you this much: many a time I've passed the door of her room and I've distinctly heard her in there crying—and I know that kind of crying! I felt all along he'd come back and I've said so to her repeatedly. Now, you see he's here. Before he went away, he was most pronounced in his attentions, sent her flowers and everything,—and I don't know how many postals he's written her from Paris. She's kept every one of them. . . . You mean well, Samuel, and I believe you've had a change of heart and that God in His Infinite mercy has seen fit to redeem you, and I believe that if you'll steady down, you'll amount to something, but you mustn't interfere with matters that do not concern you. Ruth knows her own mind, and don't you forget it. She's deeply in love with Stanford Marsh, or I miss my guess."

Sam glanced at his aunt's set face as she marched along beside him and saw the uselessness of saying anything further. He shrugged, setting his jaw grimly.

"What's more," Aunt Sarah said finally, "your uncle thinks so, too."

§ 4

It was with a beating heart, the next morning, that Sam, by the route with which for the first three years of his stay in New York he had grown so familiar, walked downtown toward the offices of Hartshone & Faber. With interest he noted the changes that had occurred: the big silk wholesale house on the corner of Fourth Street had moved away; F. W. Bates had gone, too; there was an imposing new office building at Bleecker Street; the fruit-stand at the intersection of Grand where he had often bought himself a couple of apples was no longer there, a palatial saloon with art glass windows

and a white-tiled entrance had opened its doors in the immediate neighborhood. But Canal Street seemed the same thronging, gritty, odorous thoroughfare, and Hartshone & Faber presented the same drab, dusty, dismal appearance.

Mr. Faber was pleasantly affable, nothing more. Sam told him he was eager to go to work. The employer looked troubled; he scratched his dark curly hair and frowned.

"Pusiness ain'd so goot," he told Sam. "I'll give you a chance: fifteen a veek und your carfare, but I can't allow you no expense account till ve see vat you can do. . . . Und I tell you, Schmidt, times ain'd any too goot; I can't keep you on der payroll if you don't bring in some pusiness. Ve'll give you a trial. Dat's fair, ain'd it?"

"I don't want anything more than that, Mr. Faber. I believe I can sell our line; I'm pretty well acquainted with it, you know."

"Vell, you go see Haussmann; he's got der city salesmen und he'll try you out."

Haussmann gave Sam a dingy pack of dog-eared cards snapped together with an elastic. On these were listed the names of various plumbers, carpenters, machinists, and users of hardware in the city of Newark who were not customers of Hartshone & Faber. Haussmann had no suggestions to offer or advice to give. There was the catalogue and a file of recently issued leaflets showing cuts and prices of new stocks, and a block of order blanks; if Sam got any orders he was to make them out in triplicate,—one for the office, one for the file, one for the stock-room.

Sam sat down at one of the vacant salesmen's desks and slowly turned the thumbed and dirty cards over, one by one. He began to appreciate what lay before him; every joiner and mechanic in the bundle had been canvassed again and again; Dimond, Harridan & Hecht were big jobbers in Newark and most of the small dealers in that locality bought their supplies from them. Big Harold Webster, one of Hartshone & Faber's regular salesmen, called on Dimond, Harridan & Hecht twice a week.

As with a sinking heart he continued to turn over the cards mechanically, he could hear Haussmann talking to Bert Toy, who was regarded as Hartshone & Faber's most enterprising salesman. Toy was catching the Chicago flyer that left New York in an hour; he would stop off at Cleve-

land, go to Cincinnati, jump to Toledo, cover Detroit, then continue on to Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and swing back via Pittsburgh, Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. He was in a hurry to be gone and was being not over-polite to Haussmann.

"Shaughnessy says you quoted him ten and ten off, and then you went ahead and billed him for ten flat. I can't keep Shaughnessy satisfied if we're going to treat him that way; he told me the last time I saw him he'd switch to Israels if we didn't make this right with him. Now what am I going to tell him? . . ."

Sam listened enviously. He studied Toy, observed his smart clothes, his clean fresh skin, his careful grooming, his even white teeth and assured manner, and realized how poor an appearance he made beside him.

"Well, I'm off," Toy announced. "I'll wire from Cleveland and you see that those samples of housting spools are waiting for me at the Palmer House in Chi. I'll be there on the eighth."

It all sounded so important! Sam knit his brows and stared at the cards in his hand . . . How to start in! How to land his first order!

"Gus T. Lightbody."

Why not Gus as well as anyone? He'd never get a nickel's worth of business sitting in a grouch at a desk.

He set off for Newark, studying the firm's catalogue on boat and train. It was a dreary trip, but he refused to let himself think. He *had* to fight through; he did not see how at that moment, but one experience must lead to another, and if he made up his mind to endure a hundred disappointments, success must come at last.

After an hour's searching through grimy, hideous streets in a foul part of the city, he discovered Mr. Lightbody sitting on the two-stepped stoop of his black hole of a shop, soldering the rusty bottom of a saucepan; beyond him and through the careening portal before which he was ensconced was a dark lair choked with old machinery, coils of twisted wire, wagon-wheel hoops, coal oil cans, and pots of half-dried paints.

The proprietor of this foulness spat generously as Sam addressed him and squinted up at him from beneath the visor of a grease-grimed cloth cap on which was stenciled: "Use Zane's Graphite."

The new salesman pleasantly attacked him, flipped his catalogue open, talked of tools, labor-saving devices, modern mechanical inventions, of progress, foresightedness and proper equipment. Mr. Lightbody listened, spat, and applied the tip of his soldering iron. At the end of ten minutes, Sam solicited an order; it didn't make the slightest difference how small it was. Mr. Lightbody at this point finished his job, and with a "Naw, I guess I got all I need; I make my own tools," went within. Sam, feeling that perseverance in selling was a vital factor toward success, followed him and in his most ingratiating tones, began his arguments over again. But here Mr. Lightbody suddenly turned on him and in a voice that made Sam's ears hum, roared:

"Say—you git out of here!"

The smiling words died on the new salesman's lips, and the next moment, he found himself again in the dusty, gritty, smelling street.

What now?

He walked to the corner and stood blinking in the sun. From an inside pocket, he drew the list of possibilities he had made from the card file.

"Galunski & Hogheimer,—carpenters and builders,—9 Columbia Street."

Columbia Street? How to find Columbia Street?

He made inquiries. It was on the other side of town, he was told. Purchasing a cheap map of Newark, he went into a dairy, established himself at the farthest end of the counter and over his lunch of milk and doughnuts, studied the intricate network of streets and cross-streets, to find and mark several localities he sought.

During the course of the afternoon he visited four of these. One man,—an informing neighbor communicated,—was in jail, another had moved away, still a third had married and now, with the help of his wife, was conducting a flourishing laundry; Galunski & Hogheimer were both out on a job in Elizabeth, but maybe Hogheimer, his wife guessed, would be "over on Sunday."

Beaten, hot, and tired, toward five o'clock, Sam was trudging back in the direction of the city's center, when he passed a small, clean, enterprising-looking hardware store. At once, with renewed hope, he entered. The man behind the counter was bald-headed, had a bright, shining, round face. He wore

striped sleeve-protectors from wrist to elbow, and a shabby canvas apron. He smiled in friendly fashion as Sam introduced himself.

"You work for a good concern, young man," this agreeable person told him. "I know Hartshone & Faber well; they've got a fine line. I sell a lot of H & F tools; they seem to give satisfaction. But all my orders go to Dimond, Harridan & Hecht; they've always treated me right and don't press me too hard 'round the first of the month."

Sam thanked him and went upon his way.

He would *not* let himself get discouraged. He *must* expect plenty of turn-downs at first.

Deciding to spend the night at a cheap hotel and start out fresh in the morning, he telegraphed his uncle he would not be home.

The second day was no better in results than the first. It was heart-rending to spend hours finding a man only to learn that he was either dead or had moved away or was not at home. Of the bundle of cards,—four inches thick,—that Haussmann had given him, Sam selected twenty-six as the most likely of the number. He would remain in Newark, he determined, until he had interviewed or at least tracked down, every one of the twenty-six. At the end of the fifth day he completed this program and returned to New York to report to Haussmann he had secured not so much as a single order.

"You can try Brooklyn next week," Haussmann promised, "but Brooklyn's pretty well gone over. I thought you'd stand a better show in Newark. Eddie Hammer covers Brooklyn, you know, and you got to be awful careful you don't touch any of his regulars. Eddie's hot-tempered."

Sam went back to his uncle's house, climbed the stairs to his room, flung himself on the bed, and studied the grotesque and oddly misshapen fish upon the ceiling.

Failure! That was to be the way of it. Haussmann would continue to hand him soiled and battered bundles of cards bearing the names of dead or hopeless "prospects" and at the end of a month, or six weeks at the outside, Mr. Faber would send for him and tell him. . . . Sam could hear the thick speech and words. And then . . .?

He winced and covered his face. Mrs. Faber once had said of him, he was no laborer. Perhaps she was wrong,—perhaps that was the only way he would ever be able to earn his living:

wages instead of salary. God, what a difference there was in the two words! He fisted his hands. No, there must be a way.

He went down to dinner when Meggs rang the old clapper bell, saw his uncle, his aunt, and Ruth, gave them as cheerful a report of his week's efforts as he could manage, listened to their gossip about the church and about the missionary crusade Dr. McIntosh was inaugurating, and returned to his room, to his problem.

New territory,—a new field. That *must* be the solution. New York, Brooklyn, Newark. He found a map and drew a blue-pencil line about what he knew to be other salesmen's territories. There wasn't so much as a rat-hole left for him to ferret in. They'd give him no other field,—he knew that, too. Expense would make it out of the question. Poughkeepsie, Albany, Rochester,—these were all allotted to the regular staff. Why had Mr. Faber built up his hopes? He'd promised him a chance, but he was getting no chance! All he asked was an opportunity to show what he could do. If he failed he was ready to go back to the stock-room or find other work. A new field—a new field—a new field!

Suddenly something caught at his brain. He stopped breathing as he weighed the idea. He reared up and pulled himself to the edge of the bed to sit there, gripping the bed-clothes under him, staring at the floor, his pulse beginning to race.

Phineas! . . . Phineas carried tools, farmers' implements, —all sorts of things! He'd jump at the price Sam could offer him. His dealings now were with a Boston firm,—Sam knew the concern: "The National Hardware Co.,"—they were Hartshone & Faber's chief competitors throughout all New England.

His brain was galloping now. A midnight train would land him in Framingham to-morrow, Saturday morning, and Sunday, Phineas would be at home,—by Heaven, he'd *make* Phineas give him a big order. Old Haussmann would open his eyes when he walked into the office Monday morning!

In feverish haste, he began to pack his old valise.

CHAPTER XVIII

§ 1

THE order he secured from his brother-in-law on that flying week-end marked what Sam regarded as his start in business. It was the commencement of his bicycle tours. Bicycles were just beginning to come into general use. They had passed from the high-front-wheeled variety to the type known as the "safety bicycle." It took little thought on Sam's part to realize that this new style of conveyance afforded a means by which he could reach the small town general merchandise stores where lay his field of operation. All through the farming districts of Massachusetts, in every village and at almost every road junction, stood one of these general merchandise emporiums which, in that day, pursued a more or less desultory trade with farmers in the vicinity. Here the post-office was located, hard cider and sometimes corn whiskey or dandelion wine were dispensed, and about the tall pot-bellied stove in the very center of the shop, politics and the fates of nations were discussed by the Solons of the district who gathered there on winter evenings for warmth and argument. Sam was intimately familiar with the character of such establishments; he knew the type of men found there, both proprietor and customer, knew their interests, their businesses, and felt at home in their society. The old store that Ezra Hornpipe had conducted for so many years was typical of the class; Zeb Harris's was similar, the three that Phineas operated in his chain of "Holliday Stores" were of more imposing dimensions, being located in larger business centers, but they resembled the others, particularly in the astonishing variety of goods they carried,—everything for which the farmer might have need, from plows and harrows to cotton thread and buttons, from flour, sugar, and staple articles of food, to hats, overalls, and shoes. Salesmen from Boston manufacturers and jobbing houses jogged in buggies along the country roads, and occa-

sionally called at these rural depots but their inaccessibility made that form of solicitation expensive and impractical. Only the larger stores in more prosperous towns warranted such visits and Sam was confident that there were hundreds of small cross-roads houses that had never seen a salesman's face.

His first experience with these rural traders amply convinced him he was right, and the sheaf of orders he turned in at his office brought the surprised look and comment from Mr. Faber for which he had so earnestly hoped. That first trip from Milford to Midland to Franklin to Wadsworth, Bellingham, Blackstone, and so to Woonsocket, he made on foot. It was a little over twenty miles, and it took him five days. He secured lifts part of the way, but he was weary by the end of the week. A Boston paper with a woodcut of the new style of bicycle met his eye and when he returned to New York he investigated. He discovered they were expensive, and cost far more than he could afford; but the idea came to him that they constituted a line Hartshone & Faber might well carry, and he persuaded Mr. Faber to put them in stock as an experiment, and also to allow him to buy one with small monthly payments.

It was a pleasant life cycling in the glory of autumn through the New England villages with their white church spires, their peaceful grassy commons, leaf-strewn and bordered with trees now flaming fire, turning his wheel whither he would, stopping at some inviting house for the night where the farmer's wife would make him welcome for a small consideration, often declining to accept any remuneration. His bicycle everywhere aroused comment, and many an effective first impression was made upon a curious old proprietor and the group of idlers hanging about his shop, by a cheerful demonstration of how the new "contraption" worked. Sometimes Sam slept in a barn, sometimes in a wayside inn. He avoided the dealer in towns; the cross-roads merchant displayed a readier interest in his bulky catalogue. A wire basket fastened to the seat and rear wheel of his conveyance carried his canvas-wrapped bundle of clothing and equipment.

His first week was easy-going. He was known, or his father had been known, to most of the storekeepers in the small centers close to Mendon. They had heard of Phineas Holliday, too, and because of these relationships, he met with kindly receptions. But when he was obliged to introduce him-

self and begin his selling-talk without such recommendations, it was another matter. At times it was disheartening; days would go by without so much as an order for a hammer or an axe; he grew lonesome and depressed, no friendly encounter came to cheer him along; distrust and rebuffs shook his confidence. Then, unaccountably, would come an unheralded week when it seemed that wherever he went, the country storekeepers were glad to make his acquaintance, orders were booked, food and lodging were offered, and the world and life became gracious and thrilling. Slowly as the months succeeded one another he made friends: Jacob Navlet of Wrentham always had an old gnarled hairy hand to hold out, and an order for spades or tools or tinware for him to fill; Jasper Dohrmann of Foxboro hailed him and invariably offered a glass of his best cider; Tim O'Leary of Pondville pulled his chin whiskers and smiled upon him from rheumy red eyes; while Abe Hoff, or Hoff & Bonestell at Stoughton, never failed to have a list of needs saved up for his call.

But when winter arrived, the ruts in the roads froze hard, and icicles began to hang from eaves and branches. Snow piled in drifts, obliterating landmarks, and Sam's activity suddenly came to a standstill. Weeks ensued of weary and baffling idleness. Mr. Faber sent him to Springfield and Worcester, but there he found the going hard for the National Hardware Company had practically a monopoly of all business. His employer encouraged him to persevere. He did not care, he wrote, whether Sam secured orders at first or not; if he stuck at his soliciting, made friends, advertised the name of Hartshone & Faber, it was good pioneer work and might bring results in time. Sam's success had made a deep impression upon the junior partner; he was delighted with the new saleman's work, was frank in telling him of it, in praising him to others, and he had increased his salary. Sam was conscious that Mr. Faber had a warm personal liking for him; he heard that the man had boasted about him on several occasions to Mr. Hartshone. Bert Toy, Eddie Hammer, and big Harold Webster shook hands with Sam in marked friendliness when he happened to encounter them in the office. He felt himself at last to be a fixed part of the organization; he had won the confidence of his employers, and he began to conceive a keen enthusiasm for his work and the concern. Nothing, he told himself, could stop him from a rapid rise to fame and fortune.

§ 2

On one or two of his visits to the city, he observed that Stanford Marsh had renewed his attentions to Ruth. He heard of his taking her to the theater, he found him at the table, or it was mentioned that he had been to dinner during the week. Sam watched the girl's face when Marsh was with her, but he could not be sure whether she liked him or not. Certainly, she showed him none of the easy manner, the companionableness, of which Sam knew her to be capable. He thought her a trifle constrained when Stanford was by, but, then, Ruth was usually undemonstrative, and it was hard to judge, for Aunt Sarah kept up an unending stream of chatter. Sam often wondered what Marsh thought about his aunt. It was impossible that he could either respect or admire her, for when he was in her company, Aunt Sarah became, in some distressing way, completely changed, and no one would suspect that the babbling, gushing woman was the same capable, sensible, rather austere but warm-hearted person, Uncle Cyrus, Ruth, and himself knew and loved. It was humiliating to observe her, and of them all, it was clear, Ruth suffered most keenly. That the aunt was throwing her niece at the head of this eligible young man was obvious to everyone; and the eligible young man, himself, would have been stupid indeed had he not recognized her intent. Yet it seemed in no wise to disturb or alarm him. Toward Mrs. Smith he was unfailingly respectful and polite. He pursued his course tranquilly, called on Ruth, sent her flowers, invited her and her aunt to the theater, brought the girl an occasional book or a trifling present, sent her a modest but exquisite little pearl and turquoise brooch at Christmas-time, and appeared content with this leisurely courtship,—if courtship indeed it was.

Did he really care for Ruth? That question none of them could answer. Did he intend to ask her to marry him? Regarding this, Sam, at least, felt no curiosity. He was satisfied that Stanford liked far too well his comfortable bachelorhood. He was not the marrying kind. Mr. Wright confirmed him in this opinion, with a chance word which indicated that the question of his young protégé's asking Ruth to marry him had been discussed between them. Sam did not question Mr. Wright further. Confident he knew in what direction Ruth's affections

really lay, guarding her secret carefully and with never even a hint that he had noticed the disclosure of her feelings towards himself, he was content to let matters drift, feeling that whatever pleasure or entertainment she might derive from her suitor's attentions, were so much gain for her. He even went so far as to joke her, now and then, when they happened to be alone, as to whether or not Marsh had "popped" the question.

Such was the state of affairs during the holidays and the early weeks of the New Year. In February, Mr. Faber sent Sam to Worcester and Springfield where he made his first acquaintance with an expense account; to his delight he discovered that not only could he live far more cheaply than its provision, but that this saving was countenanced by his employers. He was away nine weeks. When he returned to New York he found a new situation at his uncle's house.

Aunt Sarah during the interval had become impatient with Stanford's dilatory tactics and one evening, Sam learned, had invited the young man into the parlor, and there frankly asked his intentions. Marsh, in confusion, had assured the lady that he hoped some day to make Ruth his wife; Aunt Sarah thereupon, had immediately sent for the girl and he had been obliged to propose.

Ruth and Stanford were engaged! Mrs. Smith announced the fact to her nephew with a triumphant eye. They were engaged, and were to be married in June. Sam went straight to Ruth for a confirmation of the report, and she admitted it with an even smile and a steady glance that had in them happiness or the semblance of happiness,—he could not decide which.

Ruth to marry Stanford Marsh! Be his wife! Sam's indignation rose. Yet there were the facts, and unquestionably the half-hearted suitor had now become a very ardent one. He was all attentiveness, eagerness, fervor. In his very warmth and new enthusiasm, Sam found offense. Descending the stairs late one night,—it was close to twelve o'clock,—he paused at the head of the last flight and his heart came knocking into his throat at the sight in the hall below. Stanford had been calling upon Ruth; they had been murmuring all evening in the parlor and the wheezy strains of the old melodeon, out of which they had attempted to wring a tune, had reached Sam's ears in his own room, two flights above. Stanford now was in the act of departing, his overcoat was on, his hat and gloves

were in his hand, he and the girl were standing facing one another before the door, talking, laughing. As Sam watched, he saw Marsh put his arms about Ruth and kiss her, his lips finding her neck, her hair, her cheek as he tipped her face upward.

"Good night, you—you darling," Sam heard him say, tensely, his eyes shining; "see you to-morrow." He hung upon his parting look, then quickly went out.

Ruth's face was turned from Sam. She was leaning against the wall, and after Stanford had gone she did not move for some moments, starting violently when she heard Sam's descending step.

"Oh, it's you!" Her face was white and frightened, her eyes roving. Sam was breathing hard as he approached her, his soul sick and in revolt.

"Come in here," he commanded indicating the parlor. When she obeyed, he shut the heavy door of the room carefully and quietly behind him.

"Now, look here, Ruth, I want to know something," he said harshly, his glance sharp and determined, his brows savagely knit. "Do you love that man?"

She met his look steadily, her eyes unfaltering, a dark flood of color sobering her whole face. As she stood so, pride stiffening every muscle in her body, he thought her exceedingly beautiful. Ah, she was much too fine a creature for such a puppy as Stanford Marsh! Before she could speak he checked her with a gesture.

"Just a minute, Ruth,—sit down and let me talk to you a little, will you? I don't like your friend. I admit that frankly, although I don't think it's ever been a secret to you. I know nothing against him, but I'm sure I don't like him. Naturally, I hate to see you marry a man about whom I feel that way. I've taken a good deal for granted, perhaps, but I've always supposed you felt as I did. It's been perfectly clear to me what Aunt Sarah's been up to,—in fact, she and I discussed it a couple of times; . . . oh, let me explain," he interrupted himself to say hurriedly at her frown, "I just *had* to tell her what I thought about Marsh, Ruth,—that was all; it seemed to me wrong to force you upon this—this bounder with his mincing manners and weak face, when I knew you didn't love him. She told me it was none of my business, and I dare say she's right,—but,—my God, Ruth,—I—I *like* you, —we've always been good friends,—and I—oh, it made me

sick to see her fawning after him and flattering him and inviting him here! . . . Well, I didn't do any good, and she coaxed him, urged, and prodded him until he's finally asked you to marry him, and I guess, *now*, he's in earnest. But Ruth, you can't love him, I know you can't,—and marrying a man you don't love is just—just . . ."

Words suddenly deserted him. Troubled and scowling, he stared at her as she stood looking down at the black iron shield that closed the mouth of the fireplace, one small foot on the shining nickel rod that fenced the hearth, an arm outstretched, the hand resting on the mantlepiece; her brow was still dark, her face set and somber. Again he thought her beautiful; in that flashing moment he realized that Ruth was a woman,—he had always thought of her as a child; she was glorious when roused.

Suddenly, the desire came to ask her to marry him,—to be his wife—not Stanford's,—but *his!* The question pressed, the words trembled on his lips. He could not say them; he knew he did not love her.

Love her? Yes, but not as he had Evelyn. That was real, that was passion, which had seared his soul with hot flame, turned him dizzy, set his temples throbbing, his pulses racing. He felt nothing like that for Ruth; she was his sister,—like Narcissa. He *couldn't* say he loved her, when he didn't,—not in that way.

Hurriedly, he began to plead again, repeating his first words, filling the silence, fearful he might be betrayed into blurting out what he had been thinking.

"What do you want to marry him for? Why do you let Aunt Sarah bully you? You don't like him,—I *know* you don't. Ah, Ruth,—Ruth,—you're mad! You're sacrificing your whole life to please Aunt Sarah! It's a shame, a terrible shame. . . . And, oh, God,—how can you let a man like that *kiss* you . . . ugh!"

He made a face of horror and a shudder passed through him. Ruth turned on him sharply, her solemn round eyes flashing, her nostrils wide, as she spoke, checking herself at every few words, to shut tight her lips, and breathe stormily through her nose.

"I want you to understand, I love to kiss him. . . . I love to have him take me in his arms and hold me . . . I love him . . . I adore him . . . he's the most wonderful man in

the world . . . and I'm going to marry him, understand . . . I'm *going to marry him.*"

Sam gulped and scowled. She shot another angry glance at him, then swept past him, her head high, her hands clenched, and hurried from the room. Dazed, his mouth open, he sank slowly into a chair and stared fixedly at the floor.

§ 3

Just what were her motives in consenting to marry Stanford Marsh, Sam did not attempt to understand, but he was certain Ruth did not love him. Aunt Sarah, he decided, had much to do with the affair,—the girl owed everything to her dead mother's sister; Sam had often heard her say so, and Aunt Sarah was the type of benefactress who comments unsparingly upon her own generosity. Eagerness to please her relative had undoubtedly actuated Ruth. But that didn't explain everything. What did she mean by saying she enjoyed her fiancé's kisses,—loved him, adored him,—liked to have him hold her in his arms? Sam gritted his teeth.

With a troubled heart he returned to Springfield the following day. The winter had broken earlier than usual, and although the frozen ruts had turned to mud, and the roads were full of black puddles while mounds of dirty half-melted snow lined the edges of fields, he was once more able to take to his bicycle and reestablish contact with the cross-roads merchants. Orders came pouring in; everywhere farming implements and hardware were in demand; supplies of all kinds had to be replenished. One week he sent to Hartshone & Faber an order of which Bert Toy, himself, might have been proud. Mr. Faber wrote him encouraging, complimentary letters; they were delighted with the showing he was making, and Sam was well pleased with himself.

But Ruth and the thought of her marrying Stanford Marsh occupied his mind. On a Sunday when he had been able to reach Framingham by a hard ride, he unburdened himself to his sister. His dark looks and troubled words made Narcissa study him with sudden suspicion.

"You're sure you're not in love with her yourself, Sammy?" she asked pointedly.

"Absolutely," he assured her. "There's only one woman I

ever loved and she wasn't worthy of it. I don't feel that way about Ruth . . . Poor little Ruth!"

"Don't you think it's possible to love two women at once?"

He shook his head.

"Not well enough to want to marry them both. I was crazy to have Evelyn marry me; I wanted to give her everything I had. I don't feel about Ruth like that. I'm sorry; I just don't."

"There isn't any question in my mind, my dear, but what she cares for you,—and I think Aunt Sarah is just goading her into this marriage. She's consented because the poor child really doesn't know what else to do."

Sam frowned. "Yes," he said slowly, "I think it's all Aunt Sarah's doing. She's worked on Marsh, and between him and her, they've bullied Ruth into it."

"Why don't you ask her yourself?"

"How do you mean?"

"Ask her to marry you, silly!"

"How can I, feeling about Evelyn the way I do?"

"She knows about Evelyn, but you love and admire Ruth in a different way. You can tell her so. She'd make you a good wife, Sammy. You'll love her fast enough after you're married to her. I shouldn't hesitate, if I were you."

The thoughtful stare from under his thick, contracted brows brought from her a quick laugh. He made no answer, but the idea she had planted in him pursued him unceasingly during the days and weeks that followed.

Marry? . . . Marry Ruth? . . . He and little Ruth for the rest of life? . . . It was an amazing thought, far from unpleasant, not wholly alluring.

Faber wired him to come down to New York in mid-April for a conference of all the traveling salesmen; a new method of sending in orders was to be inaugurated. Sam, flattered at being included, hurried to obey the summons. He had supposed he was to remain in the city a bare twenty-four hours, but Bert Toy's absence in the West delayed matters. He had time to observe the course of affairs at his uncle's house.

Ruth was unhappy. It was clear to him that the engagement had begun to pall upon her, already she was sick of the bargain, and it was equally clear to him that the attraction she had for the man she had promised to marry was neither spiritual nor mental. During the few weeks of his absence, a

marked change had taken place in the girl; she had become thinner and paler. It was not all his fancy, he assured himself. More silent than was even customary for her, she was given to quick flushes and sudden pallors, that turned her olive cheeks a sickly yellow. In church affairs, she had grown almost fanatical, refusing to miss a single service.

Sam observed her with an increasingly troubled heart. His aunt seemed blind to the girl's agitation and nervousness. The older woman spoke enthusiastically of the young couple's plans, of Stanford's brilliant prospects, of his devotion, his charm, his good looks, his money. Sam glowered as he sat in his place at table and crushed the food on his plate with a savage fork. A quick glance at Ruth revealed her at such moments with bent head, seemingly unmoved, subdued, silent.

The conference of salesmen was called, was brought to an early end, and the various representatives of Hartshone & Faber scattered, but Sam could not bring himself to go. He delayed one day, he put off his departure another. He watched Ruth, he watched his aunt, heard them discuss the various engagements that involved the girl and her fiancé, he kept a sharp eye, an attentive ear on all the young couple's comings and goings. As the second twenty-four hours drew to a close, he felt he could not conscientiously remain longer; it was imperative for him to be gone; the morning of the morrow he decided must see him aboard the Boston train.

On the last night of his stay, Stanford had called for Ruth in the evening and had taken her to a euchre party. Aunt Sarah had a heavy chest cold and had gone to bed with a porous plaster, and a hot glass of Jamaica Ginger; Uncle Cyrus had his next Sunday-school lesson to prepare. Sam planned to spend the evening making up a table of discounts, but he did not so much as unhasp the lock of his salesman's portfolio. He walked the floor until Aunt Sarah came complainingly to the foot of the stairs, and hoarsely called up to him she couldn't sleep with the sound of his restless tread directly above her head; then he rolled one cigarette after another, and finally, prone upon his bed gave himself up to the familiar contemplation of the grotesque and misshapen fish. As eleven o'clock approached, every sound from below brought him hurriedly on tiptoe to the banisters that skirted the stairwell in the narrow hall just outside his room, bending over it a strained, listening ear.

It was long past the hour before he caught the rattle of the latch-key, heard the heavy door swing open and the murmur of voices. Subdued and muffled sounds filtered up from below: now Ruth was speaking, now Stanford; he heard them go into the parlor, and then, only at rare intervals could the faint undertone of their talk reach him. Once he fancied he distinguished Ruth's light laugh, and at the sound his teeth clicked sharply together.

Would the man ever go! . . . It was quarter to twelve,—nearly midnight! What could be keeping him? Love-making? At the thought Sam made a hasty step forward, a hand outstretched for the descending rail.

At that very moment they came into the hall. Peering down through the stair-well, he could make out their uncertain shadows on the stone flagging below. Still Stanford lingered. At every silence, sharp pain clutched at the listener's heart. At last the front door opened; a cold draught rushed up from below. With the dull reverberation of its closing, he started rapidly downstairs, slackening his pace at the second flight. Ruth was standing in the empty hall, her evening wrap over her arm, her hand above her head, reaching for the gas cock of the pendent globe, ready to extinguish the light. She peered up into the shadows as she heard his step.

"Oh, hello," she said tonelessly; "aren't you in bed yet?"

"I've been packing; I take an early train to-morrow, you know. . . . Did you enjoy the party?"

"Fairly well; I don't care for cards. . . ."

He asked for further details. He thought Ruth looked nervous and tired; she seemed anxious to escape and be gone upstairs. They stood a moment or two in hesitation, the wavering light above falling upon them in diffused circles of red, blue, and green.

"What were you after? Something in the kitchen?" she asked after a moment.

He felt a hot flush mounting.

"I'd . . . I'd like to speak to you a moment."

She made no reply and a silence grew.

"In there," he suggested presently, indicating the parlor. A quick glimpse of her face showed it stamped with the yellowish tinge that made her look wan and ill. She moved into the room, still without speaking, and he lit one of the side brackets above the mantel.

"Please sit down," he begged. She obeyed, and he drew up another chair near hers.

"I'll be gone in the morning," he began; "I shan't have another opportunity to see you . . . Ruth, I want you to let me say what I have in mind to-night without getting angry with me. You and I have always been good friends; we've always understood one another. Won't you promise not to be angry?"

She sat with her evening wrap across her lap, her hands loosely together, the fingers slowly, nervously twisting, her eyes lowered, her face an ashen yellow.

"Will you promise?" he persisted.

She gave him neither sign nor sound.

His gaze fixed upon her, Sam experienced a suffocating emotion; his heart swelled, a great longing to comfort her came upon him. In a moment he was on his knees beside her chair, her hands,—her thin white nervous twisting hands,—stilled in his own.

"Listen to me, Ruth,—listen," he burst out, stumbling over his words. "I can't let you marry that fellow. He's a rotter and you're a million times too good for him. You can't—it's simply—you *mustn't* marry him, that's all!"

Her frightened eyes found his, and she tried to free her hands, but Sam held them fast.

"No—no," he pleaded, restraining her. "I won't let you ruin your life. You don't love him,—I know you don't,—and it's too awful to think of your marrying him when you hate him. The last time we talked about this, you said you liked him, said you liked to have him *kiss* you! You know that isn't so, Ruth; you just said that to make me angry——"

"Go," she said, struggling now forcibly to rise; "let me go——"

"No, I won't let you go. You've got to listen to me——"

"Aunt Sarah will hear you"; she was panting, her breast heaved.

"Aunt Sarah's in bed and asleep long ago; she can't hear a thing. It's our one chance, Ruth; we've got to talk this out."

"I can't . . . I can't . . ." Tears brimmed her eyes and fell, but Sam would not free her hands.

"Dearest Ruth," he said, "you love me and I know it and you know it, so what's the use of trying to hide it? Why don't you marry me, Ruth? I haven't got what he has to

offer, but I'll be good to you, Ruth, and take care of you. You know how fond I am of you, how happy we've always been together——"

With a desperate push, she shoved him from her and struggled to her feet, but his arms immediately were about her.

"Ah, don't be angry with me," he implored.

"Let me go," she panted, striving to free herself, sobs choking her. His impatience stirred; he tightened his grip about her and drew her to him forcibly.

"Listen here, Ruth," he said now with firmness; "you mustn't act silly. You have no right to treat me this way. I love you and you love me, and we're friends and everything."

As he held her to him, she seemed to grow intensely dear and desirable. His heart yearned toward her, love poured through him in an overwhelming flood; he kissed her black hair, the corner of her white forehead. She was trembling, tremors shaking her.

"Ruth,—say you love me, that you'll marry me."

He tried to see her face, but she hid it against his shoulder, her sobs smothered by his coat. As she leaned against him, his arms about her, quivering breaths and spasms passed over her, as though she were exhausted, beaten. He held her a little from him and kissed her wet cheeks, murmuring loving phrases. But he could wake her to no response.

"What is it, Ruth, dear? What troubles you?"

She gave him only the faintest head-shake.

Seating himself in the chair she had abandoned, he drew her down to him so that her head rested on his shoulder, and waited for calm to return to her. They stayed so for a long time and the sweet contact of the girl's body in his arms was singularly satisfying. He knew that she, too, was content and, for the moment, happy.

As he held her thus, his thoughts galloped on. Ruth with her goodness and purity and sweetness had won him, had made him care for her. He loved her. It was not the blind passion and consuming hunger Evelyn had roused in him, perhaps, but it was love nevertheless. They two would marry and face life together as man and wife; it would be a sensible mating, a sane and perfect union. Pressing his cheek against her dark head, he hugged her to him gently, then looked down at her as she lay weary and at rest in his arms. As he gazed,

her eyes drifted up to meet his; they were filmed still with tears but glowed now with light. His lips drew close to hers and they kissed softly, tenderly.

"Ruth!" he whispered.

Her shining eyes answered.

"My darling—my dearest," he said fervently and their lips met again.

Time passed; rapture held them; reasoning was stilled. A sensuous trance encompassed them; they knew nothing except each other's nearness; an ecstatic bliss wrapped soul and body. Unconsciously, dead to all considerations, they kissed with long tender kisses, their lips trembling.

A sharp sound upstairs rudely startled them. Their eyes leapt to one another's in alarm.

"The light," Sam whispered tensely, "the hall light!"

He started to his feet, swiftly reached the hall, and turned out the tell-tale jet. As he did so, Ruth extinguished the one in the parlor. The house was plunged in darkness, only a faint reflection from outside played through the room in ghostly fashion. A stair tread creaked, there came the scuttle of a rat behind the wainscoting, a wagon rattled by in the street.

Sam groped his way back to the parlor, and found the girl's fingers with his own. With beating hearts, they still listened. There was no repetition of the disturbing sound.

"What was it?" breathed Ruth.

"Nothing."

"Aunt Sarah?"

"She probably knocked something over in her sleep."

The minutes passed and the stillness remained unbroken. Sam's arms stole around the girl, and she let herself be drawn to him. Again and again their lips found one another's. In the darkness, in the silence of the house, they kissed unreservedly, hungrily.

"Good night." Her hand was at his breast and she looked into his face with eyes that burned in the dark.

"Ah, dearest! I cannot let you go."

"I must."

"You mustn't."

"It would be terrible if we were caught."

"Do you love me? Tell me you love me."

"Dear God—with all my heart and soul."

"And I love you with all of mine. . . . Kiss me."

"I must go."

"Kiss me."

Once more their lips met. A dozen times they kissed before he would release her. Then she freed herself from his arms, caught up her evening wrap, and slipped from the room, a white, noiseless shadow. After a moment, Sam heard the latch of her door click on the floor above, and he knew that she was safe.

§ 4

The morning brought its reaction. He was conscious of a distinct disquietude, bewilderment, almost of alarm. He had committed himself, he had asked Ruth to be his wife, and she had agreed. Life—the whole order of his existence,—promptly had to be readjusted, his personal ambitions abandoned. Now, marriage, with its responsibilities confronted him.

Yet these misgivings quickly took flight whenever he thought of Ruth, her dearness, her sweet surrender, her lips, the feel of her young body in his arms. Ah, God,—she *was* a prize! Worth—yes, a million times worth any sacrifice he might be called upon to make. Yesterday perhaps, he had not really loved her, but to-day, the memory of her kisses, her young breast against his,—ah, now, it was a different matter! Yes he loved her,—of course, he loved her!! Dear Ruth—sweet Ruth! No longer poor, little Ruth!

His mind and heart was full of her as the train tore through Connecticut farms and villages, bearing him northward; thoughts of her pursued him to his lodgings in Worcester, they were with him as he ate his lunch, accompanied him as he mounted his bicycle and pedaled along the muddy country roads where occasional clumps of green willows bore evidence of the spring's advance. Less and less the doubts and hesitation of the day's first hours came to disturb him; more and more he grew reconciled to the idea that marriage with Ruth was his amazing and wholly-to-be-desired fate.

That night he reached the little village of Crosswicks, and stayed at Miss Penny's "Revolutionary Inn,"—a quaint, old New England hostelry where from previous visits he was well known. The last two hours before he went to bed, he spent

in the laborious composition of a letter to Ruth in which he strove to tell her how happy she had made him, and how full was his heart of love for her. Writing was difficult for him, his penmanship a boy's awkward immature scrawl, he was conscious of his limited schooling. The letter was a crude affair, but he felt it was honest, and the best he could do. He begged her to let him hear from her at Worcester; he did not expect to be there for a fortnight or so, but he had no other address to suggest.

Succeeding days were ones of varying moods; he was in love and Ruth haunted his brain, filling his heart with burning desires; he had routed Marsh and experienced a fine sense of satisfaction in the thought. He glowed a little with the sense of noble sacrifice: ambition flung aside to rescue a girl from an intolerable situation; he was depressed and impatient at the long delay that must intervene before he could receive her first letter and the even longer period before he could see her and take her to his breast again and feel her lips on his. Ah, those kisses,—those marvelous kisses! The recollection of them sent the blood pounding through his veins, turning him a little giddy, thickening his throat.

Spring hurried along beside his trundling wheel, touching the black hard buds that studded the naked trees with magic fingers, turning them into tongues of green, the fields shimmered with new emerald tints, the larks gurgled joyously, birds caroled, and Sam's heart was full and satisfied. Ruth it should be; he was content with Ruth; she would make him a good wife.

It was close to three weeks later before his wandering itinerary permitted him to turn his bicycle toward Worcester. He had written Ruth every two or three days,—sometimes no more than a friendly scrawl on a penny postal which Aunt Sarah's watchful eye might read in safety. He was eager for her answers which must be awaiting him at Worcester.

He found not so much as a line.

He was staggered, dumbfounded. He searched his mind for an explanation: she had addressed him wrongly, she was ill, she had met with some accident which prevented her from writing; his letters, her replies, had been intercepted by their crafty aunt.

He wrote at once, entreating an immediate answer, begging her to send her reply to his sister's home in Framingham

where he expected to be on Sunday. The intervening week was fraught with speculations. Again disappointment awaited him. Narcissa, when he reached her home and asked eagerly for his mail, had only letters from his office for him. Sam telegraphed then and waited two impatient days for an answer. None came.

He was hurt and angry now, and started off on a fortnight's tour with the determination to make no further advances. Ruth was playing with him, she had only pretended she cared for him, she had decided that Marsh, with his wealth and the prominence of his family behind him, afforded a better match for her! Well,—she could marry Marsh and be—be— He could not quite bring himself to finish the thought. But he was done with her, she could go her own way, and he would go his, and in a few years he would give her an opportunity to judge whether or not she had decided wisely between Marsh and himself. With these reflections he tried to console himself, but they only increased his irritation and worry. He could not drive Ruth out of his mind; he thought of her continually.

Guardedly, he addressed a letter to his uncle, reporting his continued success in getting orders, inquired about everyone's health and begged an answer. The reply he found waiting for him upon his return to Framingham, was a model of neat, well-phrased sentences in his uncle's beautifully fashioned hand; he wrote of his pride and satisfaction in his nephew's progress, quoted some excellently phrased homilies on the advantages of living a Christian life, reported that all were well and happy, and concluded with an account of the interesting visit of the Rev. Arthur Nicholson, a missionary, who had just returned from four years in darkest Africa where he had been preaching the word of God to the heathen. The letter contained no word of news regarding Ruth or even her name.

The sense of self-sacrifice, of having done a noble deed in asking Ruth to marry him departed from Sam's consciousness; no longer was he aware of injured pride; now, he knew only that he wanted Ruth, that she was necessary to him, that without her the prospect of the future was flat and stale. He caught the Boston express late one Saturday afternoon, and reached the house on Sixteenth Street unheralded.

Uncle Cyrus, his eye-glasses still perched on the end of his

thin nose, his gray hair in disorder, lacking a coat and with his vest open disclosing his rumpled shirt, creaked down the stairs in answer to his ring, lit the gas in the hall, and after a cautious glance through the frosted glass panel, opened the door and peered forth into the night.

"It's Sam," the late comer announced.

His uncle welcomed him. He had been studying his Sunday-school lesson, he stated, and was just about to retire.

They ascended to the sitting-room, Sam, with effort, restraining the eager questions that trembled on his lips. It was not long before he had the news he impatiently awaited.

"Well—l, I'm 'fraid we're going to lose our girl." Uncle Cyrus rubbed his lean chin and sighed heavily.

Sam's heart stood still.

"She's had a call and feels she must do her duty; her aunt and I do not think it's ours to discourage her. She's going away,—to Africa."

"To Africa?" Sam repeated dully. His lips and throat were dry.

"The Board of Foreign Missions needs helpers. They're doing a great work out there. Mr. Nicholson has been telling us about it and we've all been inspired by his eloquence. Ruth feels she's got to go."

"As a *missionary?*"

"Yes,—as a missionary. She thinks she's qualified and Mr. Nicholson considers her eminently suited for the work. It's not a hard life, he assures us; he has a wife, and she's been out there with him for the past four years. Mrs. Gorham is going, too; she's Ed Gorham's widow,—you remember poor Ed Gorham? She and Ruth have volunteered and both have been accepted. They go next month. On account of the rainy season, it appears to be necessary for them to start at once. They sail on the *Etruria* on the sixteenth."

Sam bit his lips and squeezed tight the fingers of his clasped hands. He dared not trust himself to speak.

"It's a very splendid thing for Ruth to do," went on his uncle; "there's no finer worker in the service of the Lord. But your aunt, I fear, takes it very much to heart. She finds it hard to reconcile herself to giving up the girl—Ruth's been all in all to her, as you know. I was obliged to beg Dr. McIntosh to see her and strengthen her spirit."

"And Marsh? What about her engagement?" Sam asked.

His uncle shook his head, folding his thin lips into an expressive line, closing his eyes.

"She felt a higher call, a greater destiny. She explained this to the young man and he acted very decently,—I'll say that for him,—and generously released her. As far as that alliance was concerned, I am well satisfied it has been brought to an end. Mr. Marsh has had a different bringing-up from our little girl. Baldwin Wright enlightened me regarding certain things about him. What he told me, of course, was in confidence, and so I don't feel free to repeat his information, but it was not to Mr. Marsh's credit. The marriage could never have taken place. I was debating how to approach your aunt about the matter, when Ruth came to me with her project of becoming a missionary. I could not oppose her; I saw God's hand in the affair. But it is all very sudden and I don't know what we're going to do when she's gone."

"How long will she be absent, Uncle?"

"Two years,—perhaps longer. It depends."

Sam's teeth shut in their hard fashion and his big hands knotted. She should never go! He'd stop her! She shouldn't treat him like that!

It was long before he could sleep, tossing from side to side, staring up into the blackness above him, reiterating to himself a thousand times, he would never let her go. Visions of Ruth pursued him even when unconsciousness came at last; he saw her with closed eyes groping her way, a precipice at her feet, himself unable to warn or aid her. His own voice shouting brought him startled to sudden wakefulness.

At breakfast next morning he waited impatiently for her to appear. She colored when she saw him, but met his outstretched hand bravely and returned his sharp glance with smiling, friendly eyes. Her composure, her assuredness were puzzling, depressing.

The talk about the table was a travesty of honest-speaking. There was no mention of Stanford Marsh; Aunt Sarah sniffed and drew quivering breaths, Uncle Cyrus rubbed his lean chin and looked doleful; Sam asked, in as even a voice as he could manage, about the African trip. Where was it she was going? How long did it take to get there? Had she any idea what the work was going to be like? Ruth's serenity was unruffled. She was bound, Mr. Nicholson said, for the German colony of Kamerun on the west coast, the port was Batanga

and from there they would strike inland, the object of the mission being to establish posts in the interior; there were some forty missionaries already there with nearly three hundred black assistants; it took sometimes as long as six weeks to get to Batanga as it was not on the general run of vessels and had to be reached by coast trading steamers. Mrs. Gorham and Ruth were having the most thrilling time, selecting and buying their equipment.

Aunt Sarah's face during this account was a tragic map of despair. Several times during the girl's cheerful outline of her plans she gulped audibly and wiped her eyes. An old and stricken look had come upon her since Sam had last seen her.

When Ruth rose to go upstairs, he followed and stopped her with a word when she had reached the upper floor.

"Have you nothing to say to me?" he asked.

"Nothing, Sam."

"When will you talk with me?" he demanded.

"Is it necessary?"

"Indeed it's necessary."

"Whenever you say, then."

"This afternoon? After dinner?"

She indicated assent.

"Go for a walk with me. We can't talk here; we'll be overheard."

"Very well."

He watched her turn away and gravely mount the stairs. Never had she seemed more sweet to him, more beautiful, more desirable. For a moment he was tempted to plunge after, stop her half way up the flight, and take her in his arms. As he hesitated, she disappeared.

§ 5

The day was pleasantly warm. Carriages rolled up and down the avenue, richly dressed ladies with lace parasols of black and gray gracefully resting on their shoulders lolled back comfortably upon the tufted upholstery, hansom cabs teetered smartly along, and three-horsed busses, whose appearance upon the sacred thoroughfare had recently been bitterly contested by the wealthy resident, groaned under the weight of their bourgeoise freight. The sidewalks were gay with

elegantly attired women and frock-coated, silk-hatted men. The bordering hedges and grass plots of private gardens, here and there, were brightly green and window boxes were rich with blooms of tulips and hyacinths. It was a glorious spring day and all the world was bright with smiles, but there was no laughter in Sam's heart as moodily he paced beside his companion.

"I want to be honest with you," Ruth was saying; "I've prayed to be honest. At first I thought you really meant what you told me, but in my heart, I knew it couldn't be. It was noble of you, Sam, but I couldn't accept the sacrifice——"

"There was *no* sacrifice!" he interrupted harshly.

"Please," she begged; "you don't know how hard this is for me. I'm fighting for every word and if you—you'll *only* listen."

"Go ahead."

"You did me the honor of asking me to marry you, but Sam, —don't you see?—I couldn't let you go on with it. A few weeks ago, I believe, I stood ready to give all that I held most dear and sacred to have had you say what you did, but now I've found help and strength, and I understand,—I understand all. I wanted so much to believe you, Sam; I tried to persuade myself you meant it, but you were being only chivalrous——"

"Oh, Lord!" Sam burst out. "How can I convince you? What do you want me to say? What more can I do? I love you, Ruth, and nobody but you. You've been in my thoughts every hour of the day and night since we parted. You know what I wrote you. You've *got* to marry me, Ruth; I can't live without you!"

She smiled sadly and shook her head.

"What about Evelyn?" she asked gently.

"Oh, Evelyn!" he cried in exasperation.

"You forget, Sam," she went on, "you forget how splendidly you talked of that girl while you were ill. You spoke of her so beautifully, you had no word of censure for her, not the faintest criticism even though she had treated you so abominably. That was love, Sam,—great love, divine love. It made me understand for the first time what our Lord's love was like when He asked His father to forgive them who were persecuting Him. Caring for you as I did, it seemed to me I didn't have the capacity for love like that. I realized how weak I

was, and it sent me to my knees, and—oh, how I prayed! . . . I know now I was very selfish. I wanted to be worthy of you, take the place of that poor unfortunate girl in your heart and make up to you in devotion and service what she had robbed you of. How wicked it was of me! But I didn't know *then* it was wicked. God had to send a still greater trial to open my eyes. He made you say the words I had wanted so badly to hear, and made you say them out of pity! . . . Oh, don't! . . . Don't interrupt me; let me finish! . . . And then just as I was about to let myself *pretend* to believe you meant it all, He sent His messenger to save me, and to show me the way out! . . . Oh, Sam, Sam,—there's something in each of our souls that once in a while whispers the truth and you know it's God's own voice speaking to you, and I know,—know—*know* that Mr. Nicholson was sent here with a message for *me*. It's the call of my Heavenly Father and I must obey the summons. I have suffered, I have struggled and prayed. When your letters came it was hard not to answer them and believe your words. But I begged for guidance and strength, and my prayers have been answered, and I can dedicate my life now to this great Christian service with a joyful heart. It's greater than my love for you, Sam,—that's the glorious thing about it. I love you and I shall always love you, and, now, I can say it without shame. I'm proud to admit it, for it no longer matters to me. Even if you were to convince me this minute you really cared for me and me alone, it would make no difference. I am bent on bearing the gospel to poor black men and women. Sometimes I wonder at my great good fortune. Do you realize what a privilege it is to be God's messenger to those heathen folk, to take them the message of Christ's love and how He died for them that they might live forever? . . . I want to do this work, Sam, more than anything in the world. I want it more than I do you. I shall always love you to the end of my life, but I shall never marry you. Marriage I must put out of my life. I have dedicated myself to God and in His work I shall find my reward and my happiness."

"Ruth,—I just can't bear it!" he said hoarsely, when she fell silent.

"Oh, yes, yes, you can, Sam; I'm happy now, I'm going to do the work I love."

"But you don't understand; you're just—just throwing away

your life. I love you, Ruth, with my whole heart, I want you for my wife. You and I can face life and conquer it together. I can't go on without you."

"You think that, Sam,—you *think* you care for me; it's generous of you, dear, and I *do* appreciate it. But *I* know, and you'll realize after I'm gone, that it's Evelyn and not me who has your true love."

"That woman! I *hate* her!" he cried. "She's a common—she's the lowest of the low, and I must have been crazy ever to think she was anything else."

"How unworthy she is has little to do with it, Sam. You loved her and sacrificed everything to try and lift her up from her degradation. You gave her your whole heart, and you have only pity and a kindly feeling for me."

"It's not so. I love you differently, that's all. Whatever I felt for Evelyn is dead long ago. I love you a hundred times better than I ever loved Evelyn. You're an infinitely finer woman than she was or ever could be, and I love you in a finer way. . . . Oh, Ruth,—can't you see? You're breaking my heart. I love you and only you, and it's intolerable to think of your going out there to Africa and living among savages. What will become of you? What do you know of the hardships of a missionary life? Sickness? Loneliness? You haven't an idea of what's in store for you!"

"God will take care of me. Mr. Nicholson says that it's a glorious life and the most beautiful spot in the world."

Sam cursed savagely to himself. He could see it all, see how she had been flattered and hoodwinked; they had talked "the service of God" and "the noble vocation of the missionary" to her until, weary and sick at heart, she had seemed to behold in the course they advocated, a solution for all her troubles. Nicholson had exhorted, Dr. McIntosh urged, her uncle approved,—her friends in the Sunday-school, her church acquaintances had looked at her in awe and admiration, adding their applause. Hypnotized by the unity of opinion, exalted with religious fervor, entranced by the romance of the adventure, she had been convinced it *was* her business to go.

"And do you honestly think," he said, "you are serving God better by converting a few ignorant Negroes who have no real economic value than by staying here, marrying me, and bringing our children into the world?"

He heard her catch her breath.

"You shouldn't talk that way, Sam," she said in a low voice.

"Why shouldn't I? Why not speak the truth? Our whole lives are at stake, and I'm not going to mince phrases. Don't go away, Ruth; stay here, marry me, and let's have our home and our children. Someone else can carry the gospel to Africa,—someone who isn't fitted to become a mother. Let Mrs. Gorham go; she isn't needed here and she'd make a splendid missionary. . . ."

His words poured into her ear, his head close to hers, his breath hot upon her cheek. At times he thought she wavered, tears trembled on her lashes; she stared upward at the sky to keep them from falling. With compressed lips she shook her head again and again to his arguments. In a doorway she stopped and frankly wiped her wet eyes. Now and then, he caught her lips moving, and he suspected she prayed.

"Sam—Sam, I won't—I *can't* do what you ask me. I see my duty straight ahead of me, God has called me and I must go. Won't you spare me, won't you try and make it easier?"

He was stilled. Her pitifulness went to his heart; he sensed how greatly she suffered. They walked on and on until they reached the Park, and then followed one of its curving paths beneath young trees bursting now with new leaves, the grassy lawns on either side fragrant with lush smells. Nursemaids and mothers, their sleeping charges in net-covered buggies beside them, lined the benches; children romped and shrilled over their play; casual men, the discarded Sunday newspaper folded beside them or stuffed into their pockets, drowsily reviewed the slow procession that sauntered past; couples, their faces close together, the male arm along the back of the seat, murmured in absorption and laughed, oblivious of observation. The scene was sylvan, arcadian, tranquil; nowhere was there evidence of hurry; the people on their afternoon of rest and beauty, drank deeply of ease and peace.

Sam and Ruth found a spot on the grass and seated themselves. Behind them a screen of trees shut off the curving walk and its strolling groups; before them the sward swept down in a smooth dip to a driveway two hundred yards away. Here and there white figures and torn newspapers broke the velvety carpet of green. Sam lay upon his elbow, chewing blades of grass; Ruth, her hands clasped in her lap, sat near. The afternoon was waning; there was a noticeable lengthening of

the shadows; the promenading populace had set their faces homeward, the procession of carriages and cabs had thinned.

"How long will you be gone?" Sam asked at length.

"Mr. Nicholson says two years. I have to promise to stay that long, but I don't think I shall want to come home then."

There was an interval.

"Ruth, dear," Sam began once more, "don't you think you're making a mistake? I love you; I mean it. Give me a chance to prove it. Wait a year before you go and see how you feel about it then. You can't know your own mind."

"Oh, yes, I do, and it's fully made up; thinking about it wouldn't alter my decision in the slightest. Besides, we can't wait; we must get there, Mr. Nicholson says, before the rainy season begins."

"Ruth—Ruth—" He did not go on, desolation settled upon him; she shook her head sadly at the note of anguish in his voice.

"I'm so sorry, Sammy."

§ 6

They had gone to evening service,—Uncle Cyrus, Aunt Sarah, and Ruth, while Sam sat in his room, his feet cocked on the sill of the open window, his empty pipe gripped between his teeth. His future, his circumstances, his whole life absorbed him.

Ruth had refused him, definitely said no, and he had pleaded with all his strength, had used every argument he knew to persuade her to change her mind. But now that it was over and the final word said, he was aware of a feeling of relief. He could not reconcile himself to the sense of escape that was now upon him. He loved Ruth,—there was no question about that; he would have been full of joy if she had accepted him, but since she had refused, he was free; there were to be no ties, no burden, no responsibility,—only what he owed to himself. Selfish? Perhaps, but wanting Ruth was selfish. Close at hand,—so close that he clearly beheld it,—was the picture of himself and Ruth, married, home-building, raising a family. The setting was always a New England farmhouse. During his bicycle ramblings the last few weeks, he had noted a score of such homes,—a few acres of orchard, a barn with chickens and cows,—he saw Ruth busy in and about the house, cooking,

tending it, making beds, feeding the chickens,—saw her like Narcissa, living that kind of life, and himself trundling over the country roads on his wheel, gone for a week, ten days, getting orders here and there, making friends of his customers, coming home at the end of a successful trip, counting the days and hours to that return, glad to be there, glad to have her in his arms, delighting her by his coming.

And there was another picture, less definite though equally alluring, in which Ruth had no place. Its background was offices, thronging streets, skyscrapers, and in its center was himself, alone, organizing, directing, administering; large enterprises felt his guiding hand, a thousand men obeyed his orders and his will. A faint smile touched the corners of his lips as his imagination sharpened the details of the scene. Ambition flamed. It was America in him calling. Generation after generation of men in this new country had felt the same urge; one and all hungered for preference and power, success and wealth. Money was the only standard by which men's achievement was rated,—and money he would have. Mr. Wright's words came back to him: perseverance, hard work, self-denial, these qualities at the outset of a man's career landed him eventually at the top of the ladder. But with a wife at the outset,—a wife and children and a home to maintain,—could it still be accomplished? Ruth might prove an added incentive, or she might be merely a weight about his neck. He thought of Narcissa and of Phineas. Narcissa had little or no sympathy with her husband's industry, but then Phineas neglected her. Sam could not see himself neglecting Ruth. He would give her all the companionship and love that were her due. Perhaps it was this very obligation a man owed his wife that often kept him from the success of which he dreamed. Well, suppose he relinquished ambition, suppose he accepted Ruth, the farmhouse and the children? His heart told him it would be enough,—he would be satisfied.

A wonderful girl she was. He thought of her sweetness, her girlishness, her purity, her goodness, her beauty; he thought of the feel of her glorious young person in his arms, her lips as he had crushed them against his own there in the parlor in the dark of that night, he thought of how she had yielded to him, hung in her embrace, given back pressure for pressure. Love had met love, then, and now as the memory of that hour crept back upon him, his pulse quickened, his mouth grew dry,

his throat tightened, and his hands gripped the chair until his nails whitened. Physically she was perfection, spiritually she was pure and good, companionably she was all he could ever desire in a wife.

And it came to Sam as he sat there with his feet cocked on the window-sill and his pipe close gripped between his teeth, that the way to win Ruth was to take her. He had but to put his arms about her, fold her to him, compel her to lift her lips to his, and she would capitulate. She could renounce him and deny her love as long as she had only her thoughts with which to deal. She was not proof against his arms, his kisses. The thought fired him. Quickly he reached for his watch. In ten minutes,—fifteen at most,—she, with her uncle and aunt, would return. He saw himself hastening downstairs, meeting them ere they started up, saw himself greeting them, asking about the service, who preached and so on, heard himself begging Ruth for a few words alone with him, the old people departing, she following him into the parlor with eyes a little frightened, color darkening her cheeks, saw her standing facing him in the blue hat and cape she always wore to church, her beauty enveloping her in an aura and shining radiantly from her round dark eyes; then with a quick movement he saw himself suddenly taking her in his arms, crushing her against him, kissing her neck, her hair, the white tips of her ears, telling her with broken words that he would never give her up, telling her she must—she *had* to be his wife,—telling her he would fight —fight—fight for her, drag her off the steamer if necessary, kissing her with every word until her resistance grew less and less, finally giving way before the overwhelming rush of his love, her mouth lifting itself involuntarily to his, their lips meeting, throbbingly, passionately.

He was on his feet, his blood racing, his breath uneven. With light tread he strode to the door, opened it with a single quick motion, and stood there listening. Silence reigned, the whole house was empty, there was no living person in it, he knew, save himself. Another glance at his watch. It was quarter past nine. Any moment, now, he would hear them.

There it was! The sound of the opening door, the jingle of the keys, his aunt's voice, Ruth's sweet accents in reply, the click of shoes on the stone flagging, the rattle of Uncle Cyrus's cane in the hat-rack. Sam swiftly stepped to the banisters, descending one or two steps, then paused. His

heart was pounding, the blood throbbing in his ears. If he went down it meant Ruth, marriage, and a family,—cares, responsibilities, burdens, chains; if he turned back, it meant the pursuit of his ambition, the realization of all the hopes he entertained for business success. Thus the choice presented itself. There and then, it seemed to him, his destiny must be decided. The door below closed, he could hear his uncle fastening the bolt chain, his aunt and Ruth coming up, the stairs creaking complainingly beneath their weight. With a faint snip, the round gas globe of art glass went out, and only the hall light on the second floor shed its dim illumination. Nearer he could hear Aunt Sarah's panting breathing, and could see her black gloved hand on the banister-rail slowly ascending. Now or never. He took three steps down and stopped, holding his breath, the blood roaring in his ears; then abruptly he turned in panic, ran up the half dozen to the landing above, careless of noise.

His aunt's voice, in alarm, reached him before he gained his room.

"What is it! . . . Samuel? . . . Is that you, Samuel?"

"Yes, Aunt Sarah."

"Gracious, how you scared me! What're you up to?"

"Nothing. Going to bed, that's all."

'Well—I . . ."

'Good night."

"Good night."

He closed the door behind him, and leaned his back heavily against it. With a hand that shook, he covered his closed eyes a moment as he bent his head. His uncertain fingers touched his forehead and found it wet.

CHAPTER XIX

§ 1

In the summer of 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair, Sam, pausing a moment in a ramble through the Midway Plaisance, noticed a man with his back toward him whose air and carriage had a strangely familiar note. He was accompanied by a woman. Sam circled about him to obtain a better look and found his impression correct: the man *was* Jack Cheney. Jack caught his eye at the same moment and immediately his face broke into a smile of recognition. They pushed toward each other through the crowd and warmly shook hands.

"Well-l,—if it isn't old Sam Smith!"

"Jack! . . . How are you, Jack?"

They grinned awkwardly at one another after the manner of men who have not met for a long time, pumping forearms.

"What you doing 'round here?"

"Taking in the sights like everybody else. Big show, isn't it?"

"Bet your life. Where you keeping yourself, now?"

"Back in Canton. Doing very well there. . . . And you?"

"Oh, New York. Guess I'll never live any other place; New York suits me all right. I only got here day before yesterday, —had some business to attend to. Good excuse,—huh? I'm here just for a couple of days; going back to-morrow."

Sam's eyes took in Jack's companion,—a girl with small pretty features and a tilt-up nose. Her clothes were of the prevailing fashion,—a cart-wheel sailor hat tipped slightly, big puffed sleeves, a long skirt that touched the ground, a feather boa, and parasol. She carried herself with a stylish air.

"I'd like to have you meet my wife, Sam. This is an old friend of mine, my dear. You've heard me speak of Sam Smith?"

"Why, I didn't know you were married, Jack."

"*Just* married," his friend laughed, coloring.

The girl was small and had a dainty figure; her eyes shone with bright eagerness and she smiled coquettishly upon the new acquaintance.

"We're honeymooning," she confessed; "married last Monday."

"Well, is that so?" Sam said, embarrassed. "Well, is that so? Well,—congratulations."

There was a pause; they continued to grin awkwardly at one another, the young wife betraying her consciousness of Sam's glance. She sent him swift glimpses of her dark eyes.

"*You're* not married?" Jack asked.

"Me? No; nothing like that. Too darned busy to think about a wife. Have my hands full as it is."

"What you doing? Still with the same old hardware outfit? Hartsheen and something, isn't it?"

"Yep,—still selling screws and nails. . . . You look a lot older, seems to me, Jack. Don't recognize you with that mustache."

"Oh, I've had that a long time; raised it in Germany. You have to look ancient in my profession."

"How long's it been since you got back?"

"Three years. . . . Let me see; yes, it's three years. Guess it's been five since I saw you. I tried to get hold of you when I came home. Went back to your office, but they said you were out of town."

"I'm on the road most of the time. Where's Matt?"

"He's in New York; doing splendidly there; has a fine reputation already. You ought to look him up. I'll send you his address."

"Great! I'd like to see Matt again. . . . Suppose you know about poor old Baldwin Wright? Rotten, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I heard about it." Cheney shook his head frowning. "Poor old boy. I was really very fond of him."

"Taylor Evans's caught on,—hasn't he?"

"I should say so! His book made quite a hit. You read it, of course?"

"Oh, yes, long ago."

Sam smiled significantly. "Recognize any of his characters?"

"Well, I suspected where he got some of his material."

Jack's wife kept glancing from one face to the other as they talked, eager to be included in their conversation.

"Is that *Tarnished Wings?* . . . It's a grand book! Oh, I just adored it!"

"He deserved all the praise he received. He was nearly two years writing it, and he worked hard, too. I thought he made a mighty interesting story out of it."

Questions, news, bits of gossip that interested both, trembled on the men's lips. The presence of the woman restrained them. Both wondered how they might see each other alone.

"Where you stopping?" Sam asked.

"At the Annex."

"Whew! Some style to you folks!"

"Well,—you know, you have to do things right when you're on your honeymoon."

"I'm over at the Palmer House. Wish we could get together. . . . Can't you and—Mrs. Cheney come and have dinner with me to-night? There's a great show here, 'The Girl I left Behind Me'; I saw it in New York last winter, but I could stand it again *easy*."

Bride and groom exchanged glances.

"Well,—*you* dine with us—" Jack began.

"All right,—and I'll 'tend to the seats."

§ 2

The evening was not a success. Throughout the dinner and between the acts of the play, the men talked across the young wife who turned her pretty head from one speaker's face to the other's, making ineffectual attempts to break into their conversation. Sam had an uneasy feeling he ought to pay more attention to her, but the talk with Jack engrossed him. He would have given a lot to have had an hour or two alone with him. Among other topics both were eager to discuss Baldwin Wright's tragedy.

"Adrian Lane was at the bottom of it," Sam informed his friend; "he came back from Paris a couple of years ago and expected to create a sensation. His voice *had* improved; he could sing really very beautifully, but not quite so beautifully as he thought. He had the most ridiculous exaggerated opinion of himself. He tried out for grand opera but Grau wouldn't have him, and finally Mr. Wright arranged a concert for him.

My uncle, aunt, and myself went but the house wasn't more than half full, his notices in the papers were very meager, and nothing came of it."

"Taylor wrote me it fell very flat," Jack said.

"After that, Adrian hung around, damning New York and everything American. Said we were a crude nation without ideals,—all that sort of rot. He kept insisting he wanted to go back to Paris, and unless Mr. Wright put up the money there was no way for him to get there. Adrian claimed that Paris was the only city in the world where he could be appreciated."

"Paris is the musical center of the world," Mrs. Cheney put in. "We don't know anything about music in this country."

The men turned their eyes upon her, regarding her a moment and Jack nodded, smiling affectionately.

"No, I guess not," Sam agreed.

"And then?" Jack prompted.

"Everybody urged Adrian to try comic opera, but he wouldn't consider it; he wouldn't even consent to a church position. Both, he said, were beneath him. Finally he dug up some kind of a French show, grew very much excited about it, and said he'd agree to play the lead in it if the rights could be secured. It had to be translated and adapted, you know. Poor old Baldwin Wright was finally roped in on it and promised to put up the money. I haven't an idea how much he let himself in for. After a great deal of dickering and rehearsing, the show opened. I wasn't in New York at the time, but I was told it was distinctly off color, and the good old elders of Dr. McIntosh's church promptly learned that Baldwin Wright was back of it. There was an awful rumpus, my uncle tells me, and they promptly kicked Mr. Wright out of the church. Then the show petered out, but not before Adrian had become mixed up with one of the ladies in the cast. She was French, I believe, or of French extraction, and she had a husband. One night the husband took a pot shot at Adrian, and the next day Adrian and his lady love skipped off to Paris. Of course, Mr. Wright gave them the money. He was like putty in that boy's hands, you know; ready to take his shirt off his back for him."

"Why, I should think he would have tried to prevent them!" Jack's wife commented. "He ought to have tried to save the boy if he was so fond of him."

"Well, perhaps he *did* try to dissuade them, but he'd always given in to Adrian, and I guess Adrian just bullied him into coming to his rescue. Just about that time, they began investigating the church books, and there's no question but that Mr. Wright had been helping himself more or less liberally. They claimed he had been dipping his hands into the church funds for years, but I don't see how that could be possible. However, they had the goods on him, all right. They caught him at Havre,—he went after Adrian, you know,—and nabbed him as he came down the gang-plank. It was on the way back he jumped overboard. They stopped the vessel, I'm told, but it was at night and they never found him."

"I always liked Mr. Wright," Jack said with feeling, "and I always felt sorry for him."

"It's just as well he took things into his own hands. It would have killed him to face trial, and those hard shells down in Dr. McIntosh's church would have shown him no mercy. He was a good friend to many of us. I owe him a lot. He taught me to like books,—and—oh, a number of things. I was an awful greenhorn when I first came to the city and Mr. Wright was the first to lick some sense into me and wake my ambition."

"What happened to Adrian?"

"Nothing as far as I know. He's still in Paris; singing I guess."

"And Vin Morrisey?"

"Headed for South Africa, last I heard."

"What to do?"

Sam shrugged.

"And Ritter?"

"Practising law in New York. Haven't seen or heard of him in years."

"And your pretty cousin? Ruth's her name, isn't it?"

"Oh, if you two men are going to keep on talking about folk I never heard of, I'm going home!" Mrs. Cheney smiled reproachfully at them.

"Sorry, sweetie," Jack said immediately; "it *is* rather stupid for you." He drew her hand through his arm and began to pat it affectionately. "Come on, Sam, let's discuss the play."

"I don't want to be selfish, Jackie darling," his wife said snuggling against his shoulder, "but it isn't much fun, you know, being left out in the cold. Anyhow, I think Mr. Smith

ought to talk to me." She regarded him with a challenging glance out of the corner of her eyes as her pout subsided.

Sam laughed good-naturedly and began to chatter generalities. But as the curtain rose on the last act, his mind wandered from the play. He was thinking rather of Jack and the brilliant prospects that once had been his, of what life probably held in store for him,—the fate of a country doctor married to a self-centered, pretty little nonentity. And Jack could have gone far, could have become great! He possessed all the requirements: charm, personality, a fine mind, and he had had the advantages of an unusual education. He could have achieved fame, nothing would have stood in his way. What made a man successful? What shaped a man's destiny, determined his career, made him a leader among men, an outstanding figure? After all, what was it that constituted success?

§ 3

These speculations recurred to Sam as he gazed from the car window the following day on his way back to New York.

Life was diverting; people had their destinies in their own hands; each one had it in his power to become what he wished to be. There were no restrictions of birth or caste in the way; not in America. A man drew to him what he desired most. Nothing was impossible to achieve provided one wanted a thing badly enough. If one desired beauty, one obtained beauty; fame, one found it; riches, one achieved wealth. It was a question merely of building one's character to realize the goal at which one aimed,—building soundly and solidly, building strong as iron,—as poor old Baldwin Wright had once put it.

It was clear what Jack was going to be. Sam could see his future as plainly as if the picture were unrolled before his eyes: a country doctor, jogging about in his buggy from one door to another, leaving behind him his prescriptions for pills and powders, coming home at night, tired and heavy of heart with the sufferings of the sick and unfortunate, to a nagging, complaining wife and perhaps two or three children whose needs, bodily and mental, would be more than he could satisfy and who would show him little mercy in their demands.

. . . And there was Vin Morrisey roaming the world,—Vin, intelligent, brilliant, capable, but always a vagabond at heart, building nowhere, aiming at nothing, drifting hither and thither, enjoying only the moment, giving no thought to the future. While the grasshopper fiddled and danced, some busy, industrious ant was, no doubt, storing up to provide for him. . . . Madison and Ritter? Sam decided he must look up these two young men when he returned to New York if only to satisfy his curiosity as to how they were getting on. . . . Taylor Evans had his feet securely set on the first rungs of the ladder and seemed destined to climb surely and steadily. For a while Sam had despaired of Taylor; he had been bent upon writing that book of his, and had torn up page after page, rewriting and rewriting, neglecting his business, even driving customers away when interrupted at his work. But *Tarnished Wings* had made an unqualified success, the critics had acclaimed it; some had declared it was really great, others that it was an amazingly true transcript of life to be compared only with Daudet's *Sappho,* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary;* there had been plenty of discussion, the book had sold well, and soon, Sam heard, a play was to be made of it. Taylor had been paid some very handsome royalties, and now was up in Maine somewhere, writing another book. He had definitely committed himself to a literary career, and Sam was proud to think it was to be a successful one. His estimate of Taylor had increased enormously.

Then there was Adrian, who had thrown away his life in blind selfishness and inordinate egotism. Endowed with a rare gift, he had not known how to use it. It was inevitable that he should end—well, among the scum, broken, and of small account. Sam was not interested in him; he was not interested in failures; it was men like Phineas Holliday that drew his attention and quickened his admiration. Phineas was justifying all the faith his brother-in-law had ever placed in him. He was shrewd, indefatigably industrious, always working, working, working, with no time for frivolities. Morally he was impeccable; he did not even smoke. Narcissa complained he neglected her and the children, but Sam thought his sister captious. A man could not do all that Phineas did and still devote himself to his family. Perhaps he *was* a little too absorbed in his affairs, but no one was perfect. As far as Narcissa was concerned Phineas was singularly generous, sur-

rounded her in luxury, urged her to indulge every whim, begged her to maintain an elaborate establishment. They had moved to Boston the year before and Phineas, with the financial backing of Julia's husband, Pat Brennan, had realized a long cherished scheme and launched forth into the wholesale grocery business as Holliday & Co. From the very start, Sam understood, the venture had proved successful, but then, Phineas was the kind of a man whose ventures always *would* turn out well. Industry and brains were bound to land any man on top. It was too bad that Narcissa did not enjoy her husband's success,—too bad she was unhappy. Julia, on the other hand, seemed to be deriving a fine satisfaction out of life. She had never borne children, but had a very beautiful stone house on Commonwealth Avenue, kept a carriage and several servants, and had been gathering together an art collection; she went every year to Europe to add to it. Sam sometimes wondered how she and Pat Brennan got along together; he had met him on two or three occasions and it seemed to him almost impossible for any woman to admire such a man, but Julia appeared perfectly contented and went upon her married way with cheerful amiability.

His thoughts carried him to Ruth. Ruth had been gone three years, now, and they all had entertained great hopes that that summer she would come home for a visit. But she had written she must postpone her return for at least another year. Great preparations were being made to establish missionary posts in the interior. Her duties absorbed her; she had come to love the simple black people among whom she worked. Her letters were charming, full of descriptions of the forest, the rain, the bush, and of allusions to tom-toms, palaver houses, and head-men. Uncle Cyrus's and Aunt Sarah's chief interest in life, was for these letters and Sam must listen to an accumulated pile of them whenever he came home from one of his trips. Often he wondered about himself and this girl who once had absorbed his thoughts. With her departure, his love, the attraction she had had for him, whatever it was that had drawn him to her, had immediately begun to evaporate, and within a fortnight,—three weeks at the most,—had vanished as completely as if it had never been. It had been like a rose tree in his heart that had drooped, withered, and died, lacking the needful water of her presence. He was fond of Ruth, he now felt about her much as he did about Narcissa, but the

hunger, the absorbing need for her was gone. When she came back, would that old longing return? He did not know. He had loved her for those few months before she went away,—loved her sincerely. How changed his whole life would have been had she listened to his pleadings and consented to be his wife!

Since that day on which she had sailed to her missionary work, he had devoted himself whole-heartedly to the affairs of Hartshone & Faber. For a time, the concern had grown rapidly, had increased its volume of business, two additional warehouses had been leased, the number of salesmen had been nearly doubled. The following winter, Sam had been called in from his canvassing along the back roads of Massachusetts,—to be put in charge of the bicycle department which had very speedily become an important branch of Hartshone & Faber's activities. The junior partner had not forgotten that it was Sam who had first suggested that bicycles be carried in stock. The nation had developed a furor for bicycle-riding, and everybody who could afford one, wanted a wheel. Sam had accepted the appointment with its larger and—to him—dazzling salary, but at the end of a year, had asked to be relieved of it. Two reasons actuated him: he saw that the bicycle manufacturers were speedily coming to deal directly with the retailer, and a slump in the business was inevitable; secondly, he found that being confined to a desk was irksome. When Bert Toy went to one of the largest of the new bicycle factories as head salesman, Sam asked for and was given his position on Hartshone & Faber's staff of canvassers.

Looking back on his two years of traveling, Sam knew he had no reason to be ashamed of his record. Several large satisfactory accounts had been secured, and he had materially increased the size of the orders of some old clients. The Hudson Implement and Supply Company,—one of Harold Webster's pet accounts, and, for years, one of Hartshone & Faber's main customers,—had steadily fallen off in the size of its orders, for no apparent reason. Mr. Faber had taken the account out of Webster's hands, and had sent Sam to see the people. He had been entirely successful with old Olmstead, the purchasing agent, and had not only regained his patronage, but the amount of business from the Hudson Implement and Supply Company was now nearly half again as large as it had ever been.

Sam was aware of a peculiar power he possessed by which he could often compel men to do his bidding. He had first become conscious of it that day in Mr. Faber's office, when in the grip of fever, his eyes swimming, he had demanded an increase in pay. His employer had been upon the point of refusing him, and Sam had *made* him bow to his will. He did not understand how this power worked or how to control it. In fact, he had no control over it at all. A kind of mental,—perhaps it was better described as spiritual energy,—welled up, poured out of him, overcoming opposition. It came to him now and then particularly if he were desperately in earnest and knew himself to be right. He was not eloquent, he had no easy nor affable approach, no faculty for telling a funny story, no breezy nor engaging personality, but he had force, he inspired confidence; men liked him, trusted him, were ready to accept his judgment and follow him.

Two years on the road had made a marked difference in him, of which no one was more conscious than himself. He smiled, whenever he remembered the kind of surly, suspicious, crude young fellow he had been when first he came to New York. He dressed well now, though never foppishly or even smartly. His suits were always dark, his cravats subdued, the cut of his clothes conservative. He bought these ready-made from one of the most reliable clothing establishments in New York. In weight, he was considerably heavier, his figure had become rather thickset; he was stocky and solid, the ungainly hard leanness of youth had given place to a mature compactness. Particularly, his face had strengthened, his jaw had grown squarer, his eyebrows thicker, his mouth more set; a certain degree of dignity enveloped him, he walked with a firm march; his shoulders had lost none of their squareness nor his chest its depth; his skin had taken on a healthy, light coppery smoothness. Women admired him, but except for an occasional affair where, in an idle hour, a chance acquaintance amused him, he was not interested in the other sex. He dressed and deported himself entirely to please men, always with the idea that here or there a favorable impression or a friendly relationship might some day be of use. Hardware absorbed him, business matters alone interested him, he read practically only what concerned trade, studied stock quotations, and was ever ready to discuss the market and business conditions with smoking-car acquaintances.

§ 4

He was returning, now, to New York with a disturbing but none the less certain conviction that the hard times of which everyone had been speaking and the newspapers talking for the past year had become a real and serious menace, and that the country as a whole was facing a crisis. There was little or no business to be had, everywhere he heard the same story of hard luck, the same complaint of money shortage, the same note of anxiety in men's voices. Both Mr. Hartshone and Mr. Faber, he knew, were worried. Things were not going right; orders were not coming in; it became harder and harder to make collections. Efforts at retrenchment were being made; the force had been cut down, orders canceled, but on all sides similar retrenchment and economy were in progress, and with manufacturers and retailers both shortening sail, it was obvious that the middleman must suffer most. Sam had been to Chicago especially to interview an important customer. The dealer confided to him he was facing bankruptcy. It was so everywhere Sam turned. On all sides, men were telling of this failure and that, and under their breaths were beginning to whisper the word that filled all with terror: *panic*. It was in the air, it was all about; Sam saw it written upon men's haggard faces; every instinct told him it was at hand.

He had a talk with Mr. Faber when he returned to the office, and his fears for his own firm found ample confirmation in the grave look with which the man listened to him.

"Cum oop to der house to-night, vill you, Schmidt, and let's go into dis. Ve can have a leedle qu-viet conflab dere vhere nopody vill interroopt us."

Sam had not visited the Faber home since the day he had gone there, a red-handed, brawny stock-room boy, to help move furniture. He remembered he had been much impressed at the time with what had seemed the splendor in which the Fabers lived. There lingered in his mind, a recollection of polished marquetried floors, of satin-covered chairs, and glass cabinets filled with rare and beautiful bric-a-brac, of golden framed oil paintings and rich brocades at the windows, the shining ebony luster of the piano reflecting soft and colorful lights. The piano still stood in one corner, the glass cabinets

still ranged themselves against the walls, and on the floor was spread the same white polar bear rug with its enormous head and red gaping mouth. But now the rare and beautiful bric-a-brac behind the doors of the glass cabinets seemed insignificant, a collection of unimportant shells and trash, the pictures dull and uninteresting, the polished hardwood floor had cracked and lost its gloss, the bear rug looked clumsy, the piano, old-fashioned, the brocaded curtains musty and voluminous. It was difficult to reconcile all this with the impression that had lingered so many years. It came to him as he thought about it, that the change was not in the room and its furnishings, but in himself. His perceptions, standards, values had altered materially since last he had viewed that room.

Mr. Faber abruptly opened the tall mahogany door that connected with the dining-room, and hurried toward him, napkin in hand.

"Peg your pardon, Schmidt; der girl never said you vas vaiting. My vife happened to ask who rang der bell and den she told us. Come in and join us at der table; ve vere chust having our coffee. . . . Oh, yes, come along, now; I insist."

Sam found the family seated about the square dining-room table. He only dimly remembered them, but Mrs. Faber at once fitted herself into his recollections: white-haired, with a fair, fresh skin, rather majestic in manner, handsomely gowned, her knuckly, veined hands heavy with rings. Nearest the door was the boy, Eugene, who rose and shook hands with young awkwardness. He was about nineteen, Sam judged,—thin, pale, with shadowed restless black eyes, dark, curling hair, and a small rounded nose that unmistakably proclaimed his Semitic blood. Opposite to him sat his sister, and a glance showed that the little Paula of the long ringlets who had stared solemnly at him while he worked, had grown into a very beautiful, a remarkable-looking girl. The contour of her face was unusual, triangular in shape; she had small high cheek bones, a straight, small fragile nose, red lips and fine, expressive eyes. Her hair was thick, decidedly black, and she wore it piled high at the back of her head. Her coloring too was extraordinary —oriental in tone,—the bloom on her cheeks like that on soft, sun-ripened fruit. Her neck was long, white and round, and when she turned her head, the movement suggested a swan, or a long-stemmed rose twisting in the wind. A lovely creature, Sam decided, and thoroughly conscious of the fact.

He found the atmosphere of the Faber household warming and friendly. Mrs. Faber was a gracious, charming woman; she knew how to put her guest at once at his ease. He found himself laughing heartily. They spoke of his previous visit, and of his strength which had made a deep impression upon them all.

"I shall never forget the excellent tray you set out for me in the pantry," he said to his hostess, "or the very good, cold bottle of beer Mr. Faber brought out to me there and helped me drink."

"I bet Papa got most of it—" observed Eugene.

"Vell,—dat vas all right," Mr. Faber said heartily; "you took goot care of us, und I'm glad you remember ve took goot care of you."

"How long ago was that, Mr. Smith? I was trying to remember the other day how long it's been since the parlor was papered. We've lived here,—let me see,—'Genie was about two years old when we bought this house."

"That was eight years ago, Mrs. Faber. I've been working for your husband about that length of time, and I recall it was during the first year I was in New York."

"Where did you live before that, Mr. Smith?"

"In Massachusetts; I came from a farm up there."

"You like New York?"

"Oh, yes, I love it."

"Have a cigar, Schmidt?"

"Thanks."

"Papa says you've just come back from a visit to the World's Fair."

"Yes, he gave me a chance to look it over. I've been there a couple of times already."

"Is it so marvelous as everybody says?"

"It's a great show."

"Did you go up in the Ferris Wheel?"

"I wish we could see it! We've been teasing Papa to take us, and I think he's weakening."

"Listen to dem! Ain't dey a caution?"

"Let me fill your cup again, Mr. Smith. I think it's hot still."

"Did you happen to hear Thomas' orchestra? I'd give anything to hear them play. They say he's got a hundred first and a hundred second violins, and twenty harps!"

Eugene's thin white hands twisted nervously when he spoke and his words came with breathless intentness.

" 'Genie's mad about music," his sister said. "Daresay you can see that," she added with a lift of her eyebrows. "Do you play or sing?"

"Paula plays der harp and 'Genie der violin; dey both are preedy goot," said their father with a smile of pride.

Sam expressed the hope that some day they would play for him.

"Oh, we'd be glad to, I'm sure. . . . Not to-night though. I've two broken strings," Paula replied.

"Ve're goin' to talk pusiness to-night, ain't ve, Schmidt?"

"Well, perhaps you'll let me come again."

"Oh, yes, by all means. We'll arrange it sometime."

Paula had a curious way of letting her eyelids flutter shut when she spoke, effectively displaying the long, black curling lashes, moving her head a trifle at the same time with an undulating motion of her long neck. A child, Sam thought her, just emerging from the school-girl age, and too sophisticated at present. Some day she would probably be a very beautiful and gracious woman like her mother, but now he was conscious of disapproval, even antagonism.

They rose and passed into the parlor.

"Well, I'll leave you two men to your business chat," Mrs. Faber said with one of her warming smiles. "And you must come again, Mr. Smith, when you can hear the music. Eugene's working very hard with his violin; we hope he'll amount to something some day, don't we Papa?"

"Don't know about dat; don't know about dose lessons. Moosic costs a lot of money, don't it, Schmidt? Dese're hard times, you know, Tillie."

"Well, you'll come again, won't you?"

Paula, who was standing close to her mother, an arm about her waist, whispered in her ear.

"Sunday afternoon we generally have some young people in," Mrs. Faber said. "If you're free next Sunday, *do* come and join us."

Sam was conscious the girl was watching him and he suddenly met her glance with a direct look and smile. Her eyes flashed shut in their characteristic fashion, her head twisted in its bird-like way, she flushed and laughed. His eyes fol-

lowed her in frank admiration as she trailed her mother from the room.

"You have a lovely girl there, Mr. Faber," he observed seriously.

"Paula? Oh, Paula's goot-looking, all right, but she's got a lot crazy notions. She ought to seddle down. Now she doesn't know vat she vants. Der c'vicker she gets married der better her Mama und I'll be pleased. She needs a husband vid common-sense, Schmidt, a fellow dat's got a head on him; none of dese moosical chaps und school poys. Paul's all right, but she don't know not'ing, yet, but, by golly mike, she t'inks she does. Und 'Genie,—he's a c'veer von, too. All he cares about is dat fiddle of his, und he can play mighty vell, let me tell you, but fiddles don't get a man anyvhere. I vish I had a son dat knew somet'ing about pusiness und liked it. I've vorked hard all my life,—all for dem, you know,—hopin' I'd have a good job some day for 'Genie to step into, but, shucks, he don't care about not'ing except dat fiddle. Maybe, Schmidt," he interrupted himself to say with a good-natured laugh, "maybe I von't have not'ing to leave 'em,—job or anyt'ing! Hey,—how about dat? T'ings look pretty black, don't dey?"

They drifted at once into a discussion of business conditions. Sam reiterated his convictions that a panic was imminent, and asserted he could see nothing but hard times ahead for another year, perhaps even for longer.

"T'ings have got to loosen oop," Mr. Faber said, biting off the end of his cigar with a savage wrench of his teeth; "dey got to, Schmidt,—dat's all dere is about it."

"I don't believe they will. Anyhow I think we're playing a losing game. The day of the jobber is over; they're going to get along without us in future."

As he watched his employer's homely, anxious face with its puckered eyes and frown, a wave of sympathy and affection for the man came to Sam. Mr. Faber was a kindly person, simple, generous, loyal, and devoted to those who served him well, even to those who served him ill where his affections were engaged; he was not over-intelligent, lacked vision, initiative, but he was dogged, tenacious, and, above all, honest not only in his dealings but in his heart.

"How do you mean, Schmidt?" There was a quaver in his voice.

"The manufacturers are cutting the jobber out; they're going direct to the dealer, soliciting orders themselves. They *have* to, Mr. Faber,—they *have* to make the profit we've been making, or they can't go on. Hard times are driving them all to it, competition's getting fiercer and fiercer, and the margin of profit smaller and smaller. That's why all these big steel foundries and coal interests are combining. The financiers all see the way the wind's blowing. We can't do better than watch what they're doing and follow suit. . . . I tell you, Mr. Faber, once the manufacturer finds he can eliminate the middleman, he's never going back to him. Why should he?"

For some minutes longer, he continued to elaborate these ideas, and when he had finished, there followed a silence.

"Und all der years . . ." Mr. Faber began after a time, "all der years I've put in trying to build oop somet'ing. . . . Tventy-t'ree years I've been in pusiness . . ." He left the sentence in the air. Sam reached forward impulsively and laid a strong hand upon his arm.

"You're not licked, Mr. Faber! Just get out of this business and into something else that has a future. Get out of the jobbing business before you're forced out,—that's what I mean. You and Mr. Hartshone can turn manufacturers yourselves!"

His employer studied him under knit brows, his gaze shifting from one of Sam's intently fixed eyes to the other, back and forth, back and forth. He did not speak, but the young man saw the fear that bared itself in the look, saw with a heart that smote him that the panic of which they had been speaking had entered Mr. Faber's soul as well. And that moment marked a change in the relationship of the two men.

"We're fighting a losing game," Sam went on with quick earnestness. "We can never come back, no matter how soon good times return. It doesn't make any difference whether or not we survive the present business depression. Jobbing's done for. The manufacturers are going to underbid us, cutting prices and going to the retailer direct. The only thing for us to do is to sell out, *give* the business away, if necessary! If you don't, there's only one thing ahead of us, and that's *bankruptcy!*"

Again there was a pause. Sam let the effect of his words

sink in. The power of domination was welling up and pouring out from him in floods.

"Mr. Hartshone,—" began the other in a troubled voice. "Mr. Hartshone vill never agree to it; he ain't dat kind. You don't know John Hartshone."

"Then he'll drag us all down in ruin with him."

"Ve've been doin' pusiness for tventy-t'ree years,—ever since I vas a feller your age."

"That's no reason why you shouldn't get out of a business when it's no longer profitable. Make a new start in some other line."

"Vat line?"

"Manufacturing. We're a manufacturing nation and more and more we're going into *making* things. There's any number of small plants that, right now, can be bought for a song. They're all hard up; they'll sell out to the jingle of a handful of dollars. We could go into manufacturing padlocks, stoves, farm implements, tools,—any of the things we carry. I'll go out on the road and sell 'em. You make 'em, I'll sell 'em. We've got to deal directly with the retailer, and the sooner we get at it, the better off we'll be."

Mr. Faber shook his head slowly and sadly.

"John Hartshone vill never agree to it," he repeated. "You don't know John Hartshone."

"Tell me," Sam asked, "I don't want to inquire into matters that don't concern me, but are we,—is the firm in deep water?"

"No-o; I vouldn't say dat eg-zackly, but you know pusiness ain't coming in, und we've got our obligations to meet."

"Don't you think we could find somebody who'd be willing to buy us out? There's Ephraim Frazee of Bush & Frazee; he's always been a competitor. And there's Caspar Brown. Seems to me they'd like mighty well to own Hartshone & Faber."

"I guess dey vould!" Mr. Faber exclaimed in derision.

"Well inside of a year Hartshone & Faber won't be worth a nickel and neither will they. Don't haggle with 'em about price, Mr. Faber; *give* 'em the business."

"You're talking crazy."

"No, I'm not talking crazy. If you don't want to dicker with our competitors, how about letting the Edgemere Pipe people or the Mammother Tin Plate Company bid on the business. I guess we owe them something, don't we? I'll bet

either one of them would like mighty well to have our location on Canal Street as a retail store."

"Oh, don't, don't, Schmidt. You're talking crazy, I tell you. V'y der name alone is vorth tventy-five t'ousand dollars dis minute."

"And this time next year, it won't be worth a red cent!"

"There's only one thing for us to do, Mr. Faber," Sam continued after a moment, "and that's to get out of the jobbing business and go into manufacturing. I'll scout around for a proposition and I'll bet I can show you and Mr. Hartshone something that will make you open your eyes."

§ 5

Enthusiasm flamed in Sam's heart for the next few months, then began to slacken, to dwindle, to evaporate. After his talk with Mr. Faber he had gone forth with an eager heart in search of his prospect, the apt discovery of which, he felt sure, would save them from ruin.

Setting about his quest with confidence, he soon satisfied himself that he was correct in believing there were many little manufacturing enterprises ready to sell out for a comparatively small outlay of cash. Their position was similar to Hartshone & Faber's,—they were anxious to sell, to get rid of their businesses,—but not for the same reason. Their problem was lack of money; they could not borrow a penny; their pay-rolls were eating up their bank balances and from month to month they were struggling along, fearful that any single creditor with a peremptory demand would force them into bankruptcy. Three of these wobbling concerns interested Sam particularly: a piano wire factory in Bridgeport, a nail mill in Bayonne, New Jersey, and a smelting and refining company in Decatur, Illinois. He visited all these plants, obtained a certified accountant's report of their assets and liabilities, and spent several long evenings analyzing them. The smelting and refining company presented the cheapest "buy" and looked most promising; between the other two, it was a toss-up which was the better proposition. The objection to the smelting and refining company was its distance from New York and Sam appreciated that both Mr. Hartshone and Mr. Faber would look favorably on no scheme that would take them away from the city.

None of his plans, however, roused either of the two men to action. Mr. Faber examined them, pursed his lips, frowned, worked out percentages on his desk pad, and agreed to talk to Mr. Hartshone. Sam had only one interview with the laconic, white-bearded senior partner, who listened to him for an hour, his eyes fixed upon his clasped hands, attentive and silent. He made no comment on Sam's arguments, except to nod his head when he had finished. There the situation rested, and Sam's bright dream of playing savior gradually thinned and faded, his enthusiasm died, and he began to think of Phineas and of a job in the wholesale grocery business. Conditions steadily grew worse, stocks declined, money tightened, failure after failure was reported in the press. Coxey's army of unemployed was marching across the country to lay its grievances on the steps of the White House.

CHAPTER XX

§ 1

During the weeks that marked the close of that year, Sam had become a frequent visitor of the Faber home. He liked the atmosphere he found there; Mrs. Faber particularly delighted him and her husband grew more and more intimately his friend. Handsome Mrs. Faber with her beautiful white hair, her fine stately figure, her jeweled hands and trailing draperies had a warm, affectionate, hospitable heart. She was by far the most cultured person Sam had ever encountered, but she made no pretensions. She loved her music, her books and paintings simply and unaffectedly, and if Sam showed interest in any of these, she was ready at once to speak of them with pleasure. Above all else, she loved her home and tried to fill it with an artistic atmosphere for the benefit of her children. Always she encouraged them in their reading and their music. Sam sometimes wondered how it had happened she had married a man like Julius Faber, obviously of a lower social grade, often uncouth, illiterate, who had little or no appreciation of the books, the music, the world of art she admired. He was very proud of the children's accomplishments, and was as anxious to display these as any merchant to show off his goods.

"Now, Mama, let's have some moosic," he would say. "Make Paula play der harp und 'Genie,—you play dat t'ing vid all der runs."

Paula would elevate her eyebrows and throw Sam an apologetic glance, but her mother would answer seriously.

"Which do you mean, Papa? The Liszt transcription? . . . Perhaps it's the Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' he wants."

"You know I don't know any of dose high falootin' names. It's der von vid der tinkly accomp'niments."

At table Mr. Faber would often wield a gold toothpick which he carried in a vest pocket. Cigars he never smoked but

chewed bit by bit, biting off a half-inch to an inch at a time with a wrench of his vigorous white teeth, openly stowing the tobacco inside his cheek. A small piece of wet cigar wrapper often adhered to his lower lip. But the man loved his home and children with the same passionate devotion as that of his wife.

He expanded genially when he sat at table, or when his family was grouped about him. He took a childish delight in the good food that appeared before him, helping his guests with a lavish hand, smacking his lips, bragging about his cook. He was equally free with praise for his wife and children, embarrassing them by his extravagancies.

"You must have anudder von of dese biscuits, Sam," he would urge. "Oh, yes, you got to. Dey're good, ain't dey? Hulda made dose, right out dere in her kitchen. Hulda's a good cook but she ain'd von, two, t'ree vid Tillie. You vouldn't t'ink Tillie vas a good cook, vould you? Vell, let me tell you, she's a cracker-jack! It ain'd easy to believe, is it? Ven she's all dressed oop vid her vite hair und her jewels und her grand vays she has, und all her fine clothes——"

"Oh, Papa,—for heaven's sakes!"

"Und Paul here,—she takes after her Mama und all der poys t'ink she's a high-stepper, und dey run after her like trout after a fly——"

"Papa, *please.*"

"But she ain'd in it vid her Mama. She don't know not'ing about cookin'; she couldn't make a cake if it vas to save her life."

Paula would sigh deeply at this and glance for sympathy about the table, indulging in one of her elaborate shrugs.

"Und 'Genie? Vell, 'Genie's all right, but I vish he'd like pusiness a leedle better but den he vouldn't be any good on der violin. Dat poy can play, don't you t'ink so, Sam? You t'ink I'm vasting my money on him, hey? . . . How much did you practise to-day, 'Genie?"

"Couple of hours, I guess."

"I don't like dat vord 'guess.' You ought to know how long you practised. You von't believe it, Sam, but I'm payin' t'ree dollars an hour for dat poy's moosic lessons! He ought to vork hard, don't you t'ink? T'ree dollars a lesson! By golly mike, dat amounts oop to somet'ing preddy pig by der end of der year. . . . Say, you've got to have anudder slice of

beef. Pass your plate. Go on,—do as I tell you! You *got* to. See, it's all nice and rare now,—chust right. Pass along your plate, my poy; ve don't take no here, do ve, Tillie?"

"But perhaps Sam really doesn't want any more, Julius; maybe you're making him uncomfortable by insisting."

"Hey? . . . Vat's dat? . . . You don't vant anudder piece?"

"I couldn't, Mr. Faber; I honestly couldn't."

His host's face would fall with genuine disappointment.

"Vell, dat's too pad. It's all nice und rare, now; chust right." His voice would trail off into disconsolate murmurings.

Eugene was a high-strung, nervous boy, inclined to be selfish and impatient, intolerant of any views that did not agree with his own, absorbed in his music. He reminded Sam of Adrian Lane. Yet he was different from Adrian in that he was soft-hearted, quickly won by affection, and ever ready to respond enthusiastically when his sympathies were aroused.

Paula was the one member of the family whom, Sam had to confess, he did not like. Her beauty, her litheness and grace, her pretty, effective costumes constantly drew his admiring eyes. She presented invariably a lovely picture at which he liked to look. But the girl, herself, nettled him. She was far too young and inexperienced to act as she did. Only a few months out of school, she yet bore herself with a grand air, and affected the mature manner of a woman twice her age. Sam was ten years her senior, but she was often distinctly condescending toward him, frequently deliberately short. It was clear he did not interest her; she considered him too old, a friend of her father, one of the clerks down at the office; he belonged in no sense to the crowd of young people that frequently mobbed the house. These were, for the most part, what her father had described them, school boys, one or two young men attending Columbia, a few with the ink on their college diplomas hardly dry, earning their first salaries in business. All were of the same cut and brand,—youths who parted their hair in the middle, wore outrageously high collars, clothes of a ridiculous, ultra-fashionable cut, and who pattered a slang which no one outside of their immediate circle could understand. Mixed with them were a few thin, eager-faced girls whose eyes burned with feverish light and who spoke glibly of rhapsodies, sonatas, fugues, and scherzos. Sam disliked them all, these chatterers, felt uncomfortable in their midst, and

when too many of them collected or when they monopolized the conversation, would take himself home or seek out Mr. Faber in the dining-room where he was almost sure to find him with the evening paper neatly folded in his hands, his jaw moving automatically now and then, a half-demolished cigar balanced on the edge of the dining-table close to hand, and a large blue china urn on the floor beside his chair, to receive his occasional expectoration.

Sam was flattered and touched by the heartiness with which the Fabers adopted him. When he returned from a trip on the road, his employer was always sure to ask him to come home with him to dinner. If in the city, he often partook of the Sunday two o'clock meal. At first he was fearful lest too much of his company might disillusion these kind friends, or that he might be suspected by them or by some of his fellow-employees of cultivating an intimacy for some personal advantage. But the Fabers pursued him, invited him to concerts, to the theater, to Sunday afternoon teas, to simple home dinners with only the family, and once or twice to more formal affairs when there was "company." As time went on, Sam came to realize that the gracious woman, who welcomed him so cordially whenever he appeared, and the man, who was his employer and so frequently his host, had conceived for him a genuine affection, and towards both he returned this with enthusiasm.

§ 2

As the affairs of the hardware concern took on steadily a more gloomy aspect, the bond between Sam and Mr. Faber grew ever stronger. They were always ready to discuss new developments, new circumstances, no matter how trivial, that indicated the trend of business, to comment on the latest catastrophe, the news of this bank's failure and that big mercantile house's closing, to debate the future, and more specifically and endlessly office affairs, the personality and ability of employees, the financial soundness of clients, schemes for speeding up collections. Sam never wearied of these conversations, he delighted in them, enjoyed details, and little by little gleaned a complete knowledge of his employer's affairs. He learned just what bank lent the firm money, when such

loans annually were made, how they were repaid, and what were at present the most pressing obligations. The common interests of the older and younger man drew them together and cemented the bond of friendship already existing. More and more Sam appreciated he was gaining Mr. Faber's confidence, more and more he realized the man was coming to lean upon him, consult him, accept his judgment. It inspired him, made him eager to prove himself, deepened his self-confidence.

§ 3

Christmas Day he was obliged to divide between his uncle and aunt, and the Fabers, eating a midday feast of turkey, cranberry sauce, and plum pudding with the former, and another similar meal, a few hours later with his hospitable friends on the West Side.

Uncle Cyrus had had his own share of trouble during the prevailing business depression. For the better part of the year, he had been working early and late at his office, striving to keep his heretofore successful and lucrative business afloat. Within the past few months he had aged perceptibly, growing thinner, waner, more cadaverous of countenance than ever. Aunt Sarah, too, had begun to show the effect of advancing years. She had grown grayer and more wrinkled, had become less assertive, less opinionated, less talkative. Ruth's departure had taken some vital element out of the lives of these old people. More than once, Sam found himself weighing in his mind the good the girl planned so hopefully to accomplish against the hurt and the loneliness she had left behind. Her uncle and aunt continually talked of her, read and re-read her letters and buoyed one another up with references to when Ruth would be home.

"That can wait until Ruthie's here," they would say; or, "The girl will be home then; save that 'til she arrives." "We'll do that when *she* comes back!"

Sam felt a great sympathy for them,—they had grown into kindly old people,—and he was sorry he had so little in common with them, so little they could even talk about together. Church and spiritual matters, Dr. McIntosh and Sunday-school affairs, had passed out of his life,—religion was all so much humbug to him, now,—and he would not, could not, bring

himself to discuss these topics with them. He knew his uncle and aunt took his defection much to heart, and he knew, too, that at their morning devotions, when Aunt Sarah still read aloud a chapter from the Bible and Uncle Cyrus still went down upon his knees and prayed, they added to other petitions, a special invocation that faith might return to their nephew's heart and that he might soon be brought back into the fold.

Sam tried hard to be considerate, and often went out of his way to do a kindness, but he saw very little of them. Sometimes days, a week, would pass without his encountering either aunt or uncle. Most of the time he was traveling, away from the city. Occasionally, when at home, he dined with them, and the infrequent evening he did not leave the house, he usually spent in his room over some pressing work. He paid his aunt ten dollars a week for his lodging, and for the meals he was supposed to enjoy at her table; the money, he came to realize, grew to be a very important consideration to her during the hard months of that anxious year.

So it was that on Christmas he dutifully ate his holiday dinner with them, and exerted himself to infuse some gaiety into the feast which the now decrepit Meggs bore to the table with trembling, uncertain hands. After they had toasted the absent member of the household in some grocery port wine which Uncle Cyrus permitted to grace the occasion, and after the exchange of the few rather pitiful gifts, Sam was glad to escape to the warm-hearted, genial atmosphere of the Faber home.

There he found a sizable group had gathered. A resplendent tree was decked with glittering gold and silver balls, tinsel, strings of pop-corn and cranberries, and a large bowl of claret punch and hard German cookies were being served. Most of the people present were friends of Paula and Eugene, a laughing, noisy crowd of their intimates, very few of whom Sam knew; a relative, an old friend or two of the family, chatted with Mr. or Mrs. Faber in a corner. Sam was presented here and there, but presently he gravitated to the family friends and relatives. He could not make talk with the youngsters; they bored him and he felt self-conscious, sober among them. Paula queened it over all. She looked startlingly beautiful in a slim black lace dress with only little puffs at the shoulders instead of the voluminous balloon sleeves which were now passing out of style. There was a rose in her black hair, to-day,

and tiny turquoise earrings in her ears. The effect was Spanish, too sophisticated, perhaps, but Sam had to admit its success. The girl was extraordinarily vital; she knew her power and made good use of it. He watched her flashing about the room, laughing, animated, excited, tumbling her words out incoherently, interrupting herself for no good reason, rushing from group to group. Everywhere she was deferred to, gushed over, fawned upon, flattered, her young friends besieging her with questions, hanging on her words, following her with eyes and voices as she flitted from one to another. Sam found himself wondering what kind of a woman she would make.

Mr. Faber brought him a glass of punch, and carried a second in his other hand. He backed Sam nearer the wall.

"Ve'll have a leedle toast, hey, my poy? Here's to next Christmas, may ve have no vorries by den, may everyt'ing be fine dis coming year und den ven ve smile, ve'll mean it. How's dat? . . . Vell, let's bottoms oop."

As he finished tilting his glass, Mrs. Faber, in the center of the room, began clapping her hands, trying to still the hubbub. When it had quieted, she addressed her guests.

"We have a little Christmas surprise for Mr. Faber, and I think this would be a good time to give it to him so that you all can enjoy it, too."

At her look, Paula crossed to the great gold harp standing in a corner, seated herself and drew the instrument against her shoulder. Eugene took his violin out of the case and began to tune the strings. A murmur of pleased anticipation swept the room. When this had died away, there was a moment's hush, and then brother and sister began to play. It was a long piece,—much too long, Sam thought,—full of running flights of notes and sweeping arpeggios on the harp. The rendition left him unmoved. He watched Eugene's intricate fingering and more particularly the girl's white arms, bare to the elbow where the black lace sleeve ended, moving gracefully across the harp strings. She made a lovely picture as she sat there, and the effect was lost on no one. The applause when the music ceased was vociferous and prolonged. Mr. Faber's eyes were wet. He pushed his way toward his son and daughter and kissed them loudly and warmly on either cheek.

"Dat vas bootiful—bootiful!" he cried again and again. "You're Papa's own darlings to learn such a nice piece to play for his Christmas. Dey're smart children, don't you t'ink

so?" he asked, appealing to the company, who agreed in indulgent laughter.

Shortly after six o'clock the guests of the afternoon began to depart, and presently only those who were to stay for dinner, remained. Of these, besides Sam, there was a homely Miss Behlow, a cousin, he gathered, and an elderly couple, also related in some distant way, whose name he did not catch.

The meal was an elaborate affair of several courses; white wine appeared with the fish and champagne with the turkey. At the end of it, Mr. Faber rose to his feet and proceeded to make a flowery and sentimental speech, but in the midst of it, stirred by his own words, he suddenly burst into tears. Sam intercepted a look from his daughter to her mother,—a swift glance of the eye and an elevated brow. It was clear she thought her father affected by the wine. But Sam knew it to be otherwise, knew what heavy thoughts weighed down the man's honest soul, and what fears were rife there.

§ 4

After dinner there was more music from the harp and violin, and again Sam was bored. In no degree was he stirred by the well-executed harmony the two young people achieved. As far as Eugene was concerned, he would have preferred by far to watch the young man juggle balls provided he did so with equal dexterity. But Paula was again a lovely sight as she sat at her gilded harp, her white hands sweeping across the strings of her instrument. He thoroughly enjoyed watching her; the little twists of her head upon her long slender neck, the way she quickly shut her eyes now and then, showing off the deep fringe of her jet black lashes, the slight worried frown that came between her brows when she executed a difficult passage, the gracious movement of her tapering forearms.

Mr. Faber pleaded for no more classical music. Please, wouldn't they play something popular? He urged his wife to go to the piano.

"Tillie can play, you know, to beat der band," he confided to Sam in a hoarse whisper. "You chust vait und see. . . . Tillie, give us 'After der Ball iss over'——"

"Oh, heavens, Papa! No—no!"

"Vell, den der 'Mikado.' Go on, Tillie, der 'Mikado'—der

'Mikado.' Aw, go on, Tillie, please der ole man; it's Christmas night."

His wife regarded him a moment with amusement, then smilingly complied. She seated herself on the piano stool, slipped off her rings, and her nimble fingers ran liquidly up and down the keys. Presently Paula, Eugene, and Miss Behlow were all singing, and now and then Mr. Faber broke in with the words in a loud thick voice with no reference whatsoever to the melody. These he occasionally shouted, marking the time with an extended forefinger.

"'My ob-ject all sublime,—I vill achieve in time' . . . Say by golly mike,—dat's moosic," he declared emphatically. "Dat's der kind I like,—none of dis highfalootin' stuff. Dat's for der vomen; dis for der men! 'Di-di—di-di—di-dee, di-di—di-di—di-dee. To make der punishment fit der crime,—der punishment fit der crime!' Dat's der stuff,—hey, Sam, my poy?"

It was noticeable that now Mr. Faber was justifying Paula's earlier suspicions. He had discovered the punch bowl in a corner of the room where it had remained from the afternoon's entertainment, had sampled its contents, and found them to his liking. Again and again he had unostentatiously dipped a glass into the bowl, and emptied it freely. Presently he began waving the glass in the air and when Mrs. Faber's fingers found their way to another familiar melody, he fairly bawled the words and proceeded to act them out, bowing exaggeratedly as he sang.

"De-fer-err,—de-fer-err, to the Lord High Ex-e-cu-tion-er!"

His children roared with delight at his antics, the others mildly joining in. Their father redoubled his efforts, his exertions bringing the sweat to his brow; again and again he demanded a repetition of the music. But presently his wife would play no more, and shook her head at his entreaties.

"No more, Papa," she said, smiling; "and no more punch, either."

"Vat,—no more punch? Vell, von more glass und den ve say c-vits."

"No,—no,—you've had plenty."

"Aw, Tillie,"—reproachfully,—"von leedle glassful, hey? Be my nice Tillie,—my dear sveet, bootiful Tillie."

At this point the elderly couple felt the time had arrived for leave-taking; they rose to say good night. But Mr. Faber

would not hear of their departing. "Vy it vas early; it vasn't eleven o'clock yet!" He addressed them as Rudolf and Frederika; hung round their necks while they protested. They reminded him they lived in Brooklyn, and it would take them over an hour on the elevated to reach home. Mrs. Faber gently quieted her husband, and reluctantly he permitted them to depart. After seeing them to the front door, he returned to the drawing-room, his merry mood once more upon him, rubbing his hands together in high good humor.

"Now, ve'll have some games, hey vat? Der ole folks have gone home und now ve can play cut-oops. Let's play plindman's puff; dat's a fine game,—hey, Sam?—hey, Tillie?"

But his enthusiasm was promptly dashed. His wife announced she was going to bed, Paula and Miss Behlow,—who was remaining until the morning with her cousin,—signified their intention of doing the same. Eugene yawned significantly. Sam rose to his feet to say good night, and immediately an argument ensued. Mr. Faber begged hard for more merry-making, insisting that Sam should remain, reminding them again and again it was Christmas night. Mrs. Faber smiled affectionately upon him and patted his arm.

"No, Papa, I really am dreadfully tired. It's been a long, hard day and I've been on my feet since six o'clock this morning. Paula's tired, too. The children and I will go to bed, but you, Sam, stay here with him, and keep him company for a little while, and don't let him have *any more punch!*"

Her husband grumbling, let her and his children depart, while he and Sam settled themselves in easy chairs amid the disordered, fir-tree-scented room, to begin one of their rambling business talks. But first Mr. Faber had to urge upon his guest a cigar from a new box which he had received as a gift that morning, and take one for himself upon which presently he would begin to chew happily. With a wink he filled his glass from the punch bowl again, and when Sam declined to join him, tip-toed out in the direction of the kitchen and returned with a bottle of beer.

They talked long past midnight, progressing from one topic to another, Mr. Faber mildly intoxicated and garrulous, Sam, listening and entertained. The man told the long history of his early beginnings, how he had first met John Hartshone in 1870, when his present partner was then running a little retail hardware store on Church Street, how he had started in with

him as bookkeeper at forty dollars a month, and how, when his uncle had died in Leipsic and the small estate had been cleared up, he had invested his inheritance in the growing concern; Hartshone and he had decided to cut out the retail business, to become wholesalers and had established themselves in their present quarters on Canal Street. From this he digressed to an account of his first meeting with Mrs. Faber. She had been Matilda Mehrtens, the daughter of old Hendrik Mehrtens who made the Mehrtens' piano, and who was well-to-do and widely known. The girl's family had strongly opposed the match because of Mr. Faber's race and had done all it could to prevent the marriage.

"My fadder vas a Hebrew," Mr. Faber said; "he vas born in Leipsic, and, by golly mike, he vas a good man und a prosperous von. Vat makes a man a Jew, hey? Religion? I ain'd got any. Vhere he is born? I vas born right here in Noo York and I'm as good an American as anybody dere is here. All der people here had fadders or grandfadders or great-grandfadders dat vere born on der udder side. Ve don't call Mr. Richard Croker an Irishman because he vas born in Ireland, or Mr. Vanderbilt a Dutchman because his folks vonce lived in Holland. Vy call me a Jew? I ain'd a Jew because my fadder vas! You ain'd a Cat'olic because your fadder or your mudder happened to be! By golly mike, it makes me tired. . . . Vell, Tillie's folks, dey raised a rumpus; dey didn't vant me for a son-in-law, but ve fooled 'em. Ve ran avay und got married, und der ole man said he vouldn't never give her a cent. Ve didn't care! Ve *loved* each udder, and ve *vanted* each udder und old man Mehrtens und dat ole cat, his vife, couldn't stop us. . . . Say, Sam, vy don't you ask Paula to marry you?"

The young man returned the other's earnest look, but did not speak; his lips widened with a half smile.

"I mean it," Mr. Faber went on earnestly. He leaned forward in his chair, elbows on either arm, and wagged a finger. "Say, I've been vanting to talk dis t'ing over vid you for a long time. Vy don't you ask Paula to be your vife? She'd make you a mighty good von und a mighty good-looking von, too. Paula's a smart girl und a preddy von, if I do say so myself. Der poys 're all crazy about her,—you see how dey act,—dey're all running after her. But look at dem! Vat a crowd! Vat a bunch! Dere ain'd a real man in der whole caboodle. Tillie und I'd like to see her get a goot husband, a

feller dat's got a brain on him, und is honest und a hard vorker, und has no monkey-doodle pusiness about him. Ve don't vant any long-haired moosical feller for a son-in-law nor any smart Alec chust out of college. Ve bot' t'ink you're der man for her. Ve've talked it over und Tillie likes you und I like you. I t'ink you're chust de kind of husband dat vould suit Paula. . . . By golly mike, I'd like to see you marry her! It vould be a mighty fine t'ing all round."

Sam laughed in embarrassment.

"Why, she wouldn't *look* at me, Mr. Faber."

"How you mean? Look at you? Vy, of course, she'd look at you! Her mudder's talked to her about you and Paula says she likes you fine, only, she says, you don't make no advances."

"Oh, come Mr. Faber,—I know one or two things about girls. Paula isn't the least bit interested in me. She thinks I'm too old."

"Vy, you're crazy! Perhaps you don't fancy her yourself?"

"Who? . . . I? . . . Why, I think Paula's one of the loveliest girls I've ever seen."

"But you don't like her, hey? Is dat it?"

"I . . . I like her a lot . . . tremendously. Why, she's . . . she's . . . I think Paula's *wonderful*."

"You know she's got money in her own right? From her grandfadder, ole Hendrik Mehrtens. He left her a nice leedle bit."

"But vou're mistaken, Mr. Faber. Paula doesn't care the snap of her fingers for me. I'm sure of it. She doesn't know I exist."

"How do you know? Vy don't you ask her?"

"Why, I never thought . . . I don't believe I ought to be talking about a wife when business is so rotten."

"Vell, you don't have to get married to-morrow! You can get engaged for a vile und see how you get along vid von anudder. . . . Sam, my poy,—you t'ink it over. It's a great chanst for a smart young feller like you to get a vife like Paula. Paula has a lot of brains. She's nopody's fool, let me tell you. Und she's a prize package. I know it. I see vat der fellers get nowadays. You couldn't do petter, und, let me tell you, *she* couldn't do petter! I've told her so!"

"You've talked to her about it!"

"Vell, yes; sure. Her mudder has spoken to her und I've said a t'ing or two."

"Oh, my Lord!"

"Vell, vat's der matter? Don't you t'ink Tillie und I talk about der young men dat come here? Vait, my poy, until *you* have a leedle girl und you'll be talking over vid your vife every young feller dat comes into your house. . . . Ve bot' t'ink you'd make Paula a gootd husband, und Tillie und I vould of course be mighty pleased to have you in der family."

§ 5

It was nearly two when Sam shook hands with his host, bade him good night, and found himself in the street. It was a frosty morning, piercingly cold. Grimy patches of snow, blackened of edge, huddled in area-ways and in sheltered nooks, lingering evidences of the storm that had blanketed the city a fortnight previously. The stars shone with white luster, coldly, serenely, in the black vault above, and fire signs, here and there, tinted the façades and cornices of buildings with warm yellow. The branches of trees along the curb stood empty and naked, hurried footfalls echoed on the pavement, the brisk cloppering of horses' hoofs swelled as a carriage rolled nearer; from afar, came the strident whirr and the occasional ding-donging bell of a lumbering trolley.

Sam turned his steps homeward and trudged smartly on, his overcoat collar turned up and buttoned about his neck, his hands deep in his pockets. A cab driver hailed him, but he strode upon his way. He had no wish to ride; he wanted to walk and to think.

Marry Paula Faber? That would be a curious fate for him. As he thought of her as a wife, a wave of pride rose up in him. It would be—*tremendous!*—to own such a creature, to be able to introduce her to people and have her pointed out in a crowd as Mrs. Sam Smith. Mrs. Sam Smith! His heart grew big with the thought. "Sam Smith" *was* a commonplace name and he, no doubt, a commonplace individual, but a girl like Paula would give distinction to both. He tried to imagine them married. He could not capture the picture; Paula and himself, man and wife, living together in the close intimacy he had known with Evelyn! He never had had any trouble in visualizing Ruth as his wife. There the picture had been sharp and definite. Indeed, it had been that vision of himself

with her in a New England farmhouse that had been one of the things that had drawn him so strongly to her. But there never had been any mystery about Ruth,—simple, devoted, unaffected Ruth! But there *was* mystery about Paula. . . . Good gracious,—what mystery! He caught his breath thinking of it. To possess such a woman, to have her as his own. To have her bear his name,—to be *his*,—to have her belong to *him!* His throat tightened convulsively.

"Great God! . . . that would be terrific!" His breath was a plume of white vapor in the night.

§ 6

Early one morning in January, he was talking over a proposed trip through Dayton, Cleveland, and Columbus with Haussmann, when a boy brought word that Mr. Faber wished to see him in his office immediately. Sam rose, wondering vaguely; Mr. Faber usually rang a bell for the salesmen.

He found his employer seated at his desk with clasped hands, a queer look upon his face. At once Sam grasped something had gone wrong. The man's chin and lips quivered as he turned and spoke to his secretary.

"Get out," he said huskily, "und don't say anyt'ing."

When they were alone, he stared at Sam a moment, his hand shaking as he brushed his lips.

"John's dead—Hartshone! . . . Dey chust 'phoned down. He vas in his bed dis morning und dey found him dead."

The black shadow of calamity darkened the room. Fast upon this, to Sam, came a secret sense of elation. Now he would have his way; now there would be no shilly-shallying.

"I'm sorry," he said; "I'm—I'm *mighty* sorry, Mr. Faber."

The man before him broke suddenly.

"Golly mike," he groaned, and he shut his eyes fiercely. "Poor ole John."

Presently he straightened himself and looked up into the other's face.

"I vant you to kind of stand py, my poy. Dey,"—he indicated the clerks and the office force outside,—"dey don't know anyt'ing about it yet. Und I don't know chust vat to do. It's a terrible t'ing to be alone."

"Perhaps you'd better go right up and see Mrs. Hartshone. She'll need you, and I daresay you can be of help."

"He's got a son-in-law."

"I suppose they've notified him."

"I don't know. . . . Poor ole John. Tventy-t'ree years. By golly, it's terrible to t'ink he ain'd here any more."

"Well, you go right on up there,—do what you can for Mrs. Hartshone and then go home and get Mrs. Faber to look after you. I'll telephone her and tell her the news and that you're coming. Don't worry about anything down here. We'll shut up for the day and I'll get hold of the newspapers, and as soon as I can leave, I'll join you."

CHAPTER XXI

§ 1

"By George, it's my birthday, too!" Sam said aloud.

He was lying in bed, staring up at the misshapen fish-like imprint that ever swam upon the plaster above his head. At four o'clock sleep had deserted him. From the first moment of consciousness, thoughts had relentlessly poured through his brain, churning, boiling, seething like a torrent. Now, it was nearly six and it was time he was getting up. The first glint of morning sunshine was filtering in through his windows, flinging a pale tracery of two long narrow rectangles upon the wall beside the washstand. In the bare branches of the locust tree beneath the window ledge, and in the scrub bushes down below in the yard, there was a nimble twittering of birds. The sweet breath of the morning was polluted by a yellow stench of stale ashes; Meggs had been shaking down the furnace; Sam had heard him go creaking down the stairs half an hour before. Occasionally, there arose the jangle of tin milk cans, the tinkling of bottles, and now and then, disturbing and racketing, the thunderous rush of an El' train along Third Avenue.

He had not begrudged his wakefulness, had been content to lie and think, his gaze fixed upon his familiar totem, his thoughts busy with life, with himself, with the future, and with the great step he was to take that afternoon at four o'clock. At that hour, the Reverend Doctor James Archibald McIntosh would marry him and Paula Faber in the parlor of the bride's home. Her mother, father, brother, a few relatives and friends, Uncle Cyrus, and Aunt Sarah would be present; Narcissa and her little girl, Mary, were coming down from Boston and would arrive at the Grand Central Station in the course of the morning.

His birthday and his wedding-day! Twenty-nine and before evening married!

Paula Faber!

How many times he had mentally pronounced her name during the past few months! *Paula Faber!* A wonderful girl. He admired her tremendously, admired the graceful lines of her figure, the exquisite mold in which she was fashioned, the regalness of her carriage, the grace and lightness with which she walked and moved, her aristocracy, and fine superiority. He had but to look at her, had but to put his hand on hers or touch her arm, to sense the vitality that was in her,—fire, force, ambition, all slumbered there. Dynamic, healthy, purposeful, she would keep pace with him, carry him far. Everything about her physically delighted him: her dark, glowing eyes with their thick black fringe, her slim long throat, her warmly tinted skin,—red on the high cheek bones with a touch of flame,—her hair, luxurious and fragrant, her knowing and dashing manner of dress,—all these were perfection. She was built like a grayhound, closely suggesting the animal—high-strung, graceful, beautiful. Whenever he fancied people pointing at Paula and saying that she was his wife, he glowed with satisfaction; the thought filled his mind and soul to overflowing. He longed to possess her, to have her belong to him, to make her "Mrs. Sam Smith."

Besides, there was the fortune she was bringing him. Twenty-five thousand *was* a fortune, particularly in these hard times, when money,—the use of it,—could be had only at usury rates. Twenty-five thousand! It meant his start. He'd make it look like twenty-five *hundred* thousand before he finished. Paula didn't know how lucky she was. She'd be a rich woman, and he'd be a rich man. They'd *all* be rich. . . . Extraordinary, wasn't it? . . . Little Sam Smith of Mendon, Mass.!

What an actress Paula was! Behind that dash and imperiousness there was a very satisfactory person, warm and loving, full of charming qualities. He had supposed her cold; he discovered her to be affectionate,—and she could be passionate. Yet most of the time she was acting, playing a part, conscious of an audience, real or fancied. She amused him,—he was devoted to her.

Until her father had put the thought into his head that Christmas night when they talked so late, it had never occurred to him that she was a girl in whom he might be interested. Mr. Faber had touched a button in him and Paula as a woman, as a possible wife, had leaped into being before his appraising eyes.

Looking back now on the events that had occurred since that singular conversation, it was interesting to trace how portentously they followed one another. The hand of Fate had summarily shaped and marshaled them.

First there had been a suddenly awakened interest between himself and the girl. There had sprung at once into being a play of eyes, of smiles, of manner, of word inflections; a game,—a fascinating and pulse-quickening game,—absorbed them, and each had found it delightful and exciting. Sam looked upon her with new eyes, alight with admiration, and she answered with quick flushes of color and self-conscious glances.

Less than a fortnight of this, and then Mr. Hartshone's sudden death plunged them all into an atmosphere of calamity. Sam had not viewed it so, despite the decorous demeanor he assumed. In his heart of hearts he rejoiced. To him it spelled salvation,—his own and Mr. Faber's. Just how or why he was so sure of this, he could not have said. Not then, nor now. He had been riding his destiny, felt it, like a horse between his knees. Opportunity had come and he recognized it as his own. One step at a time, he told himself. Immediately confronting him was the task of finding a buyer for the business and good will of Hartshone & Faber, of finding one quickly before it closed its doors in bankruptcy. Long hours he had spent with the surviving member of the partnership, poring over the books, assembling assets, totaling resources, summing up liabilities. Most of the collectible accounts were worthless, but these must be written into the inventory at their face value. The result had looked impressive, and John Hartshone had not been in his grave twenty-four hours before Sam was trying to sell his estate to the Mammoth Tin Plate Company. Enthusiasm burned high within him, and his selling talk sounded well. An old established firm,—a firm that had been doing a creditable business for twenty-three years, whose name was known as a reliable house to every retail hardware dealer east of the Mississippi, whose liabilities totaled less than half its assets,—had lost one of its members by death and the surviving one, anxious to retire, wanted to find a buyer.

It was little Ephraim Frazee of Bush & Frazee whose eyes snapped as Sam talked. There had followed various meetings, conferences, delays, the interminable pottering of certified accountants. One asset after another had been written off as negligible. Sam had wrangled, argued, given way inch by inch.

Mr. Faber had been a silent, distressed watcher. There had arisen finally the question, that Sam had known from the very outset would eventually confront them: Was Hartshone & Faber solvent? Fortunately, this could not be definitely answered. If the outstanding accounts were good, the concern was sound; if not, then otherwise. Ephraim Frazee had thrown up his hands in disgust, but Sam would not permit him to escape. On one side he had to placate Mr. Faber who was anxious to break off negotiations; on the other, to dangle what bait remained before Frazee's acquisitive little eyes: To own Hartshone & Faber, to be the sole proprietor of such a firm, always his rival! Admitting there was a question of its solvency, the name was worth a good deal, wasn't it? Times were on the mend, the accounts which the investigators threw out as worthless might prove otherwise; some of these doubtful credits might be as sound as a dollar. Wasn't it a good speculation, a good gambling chance?

Having hooked his fish, Sam eased him, reeled him, played him, and finally landed him. Mr. Faber parted with the business that represented to him his life's work, and in return received thirty-five hundred dollars in cash.

When the deal was consummated and the fluttering bit of paper representing his interest in his old concern was handed him, Mr. Faber had studied it with knit brows and a hard-set jaw and then with fingers that trembled a little, laid it back upon the table before him.

"Vell, my poy, you've had your vay, und dere's all dat's left. Dat ain'd much to show at my age! Dere's dis house,—dat's in Tillie's name,—und here's my life insurance on v'ich I might be able to raise a few t'ousand,—und dat's all. . . . You keep saying you know vat you're about, und please God you're right."

"I *know* I'm right," Sam had assured him, his heart beating high with confidence. Once more he went over the arguments poured into his ears since his return from Chicago. Ephraim Frazee was a "sucker" and before the year was out it would be shown. Thirty-five hundred dollars cash in hand was better than being in the hole and a bankrupt. Now Mr. Faber was in a position to start with a clean slate and reputation.

"Maybe you're right, und maybe you ain'd. Time alone vill tell. Put now I ain'd got no income,—not'ing. Der new

scheme looks all right,—I'll say I t'ink it looks good,—put vhere you going to get der money to start oop again so fine und prosperous? Vhere you going to get der money to puy dis nail mill?"

Where indeed was he to get it? That immediately had been his next problem.

The Sampson Steel and Wire Company, located at Bayonne, New Jersey, was the nail mill which for some time Sam had been investigating. There was a great deal about this property that appealed strongly to his imagination. The enterprise was a sound one, and was making money,—a little even during the prevailing difficult times,—and the more he familiarized himself with the business, the more satisfied he became that under a new management and with a small investment of new capital it could be made to pay in even more profitable terms. The concern had gotten into difficulties as the result of local conditions, a quarrel between its owners and certain wealthy neighboring residents. The lower end of Bayonne at that time was one of the choicest of New York's summer environs; it had been sometimes called "The Newport of New York" and up and down the shores of Newark Bay and along the Kill Von Kull were many beautiful estates. At the very tip of the peninsula, on the bank of the narrow strip of water that separates it from Staten Island, stood the Sampson nail mill. The Sampsons, father and son, had been engaged in the industrial iron business for many years, and appreciating the advantages for transportation afforded by the water that touched their summer home on two sides, had decided to erect a factory on the spot. The opposition to the introduction of this commercial enterprise into the summer colony had been bitter, but the Sampsons had persisted and the nail mill had come into existence, an uncompromising and unsightly brick building with a towering chimney stack within a few feet of the old Sampson home, which they had then transformed into general offices. These activities they had not been allowed to pursue in peace. Influence had been set to work, a word had been spoken here, another there, and finally a significant one had reached the ear of the president of the New Jersey Savings and Loan Society. Sam had learned all the details from young Boardman Sampson, the son. The loan the Society held on the Steel and Wire Company had been promptly called when it fell due, and the president had firmly declined to renew it. By pinching, squeez-

ing, borrowing where they could, the Sampsons had been able to raise the money, but the result had left their enterprise in a crippled condition. The opposition had taken a form of persecution, had risen like a tide on every side. It had penetrated old Sampson's church, his club, even the circle of his immediate friends, and the culmination of it all, with increasing financial worries, had been more than he could endure; he had broken during the summer of '93 and died shortly after, bitter and undefeated in spirit to the very last. On his death-bed he had wrung a promise from his son that he would fight on. Now the young man's health was impaired, and his wife was eager to have him sell out and go into some new field of endeavor. This he would not agree to do until he was convinced that a bona fide purchaser would carry on the business, and thus satisfy his father's wishes.

Sam had been attracted by the situation. Neither Mr. Faber nor himself could be touched through church or club or friends. The only requisite they needed was enough money. Young Mr. Sampson's interest could be purchased for $50,000, —the property, Sam was satisfied, was worth twice that,—but he did not propose to venture into this new and untried field without plenty of reserve funds. He believed that Mr. Faber and himself should have behind them as much again as the purchase price.

The days of January and February had been hectic ones, indeed. Sam had been having conferences with Ephraim Frazee in the mornings and meeting Boardman Sampson in the afternoons; in the evenings he had gone to the Fabers to talk business and had almost invariably encountered the conscious daughter of the house. There had been a few shy words between them and the exchange of thrilling glances. From the first, he had been confident he should "sell" Ephraim Frazee, and as soon as this was definitely settled and out of the way, he had set his mind to raising the necessary funds for swinging the other deal.

He had fancied that his earnestness might persuade a New York bank to finance the proposition; there was J. G. Breckinridge, vice-president of the Fourth National, who was his warm friend and well-wisher, but money was tight and when it was to be had at all was loaned at almost prohibitive rates. He had thought, too, of Phineas and Pat Brennan. As a last resort, he had felt he might wring something out of each of his

brothers-in-law, but he had been loath to make the appeal, believing that independence was an important factor, and he wanted to play a lone hand. Mr. Faber, by mortgaging his home and borrowing upon his life insurance, could be counted upon for twenty-five, possibly thirty thousand dollars; Jerry Haines, whom Sam had approached about the matter, agreed to come in for three thousand more; an additional fifty thousand had to be raised somehow; Sam was fearful of going ahead with less. On a certain day toward the end of February, when he had been discussing ways and means with Mr. Faber, the latter again mentioned his daughter's inheritance.

"Dere's Paula's money, Sam," he had said; "dere's tventy-five t'ousand dat's yours to do vat you like vid should you und she take a fancy to von anudder und get married."

Sam, his fine-pointed pencil poised ove his figuring, had fixed the man opposite him with a sharp interrogative glance.

"It's der child's own money left her by her grandfadder. Dat vas ole Hendrik Mehrtens, you remember. V'en he died he left Paula t'venty-five one t'ousand dollar Government t'ree per cent's; dey're like so much gold to-day. He left der money in trust for her until she vas of age und dat vas last year, und den der executors turned her ponds over to me, und I've got 'em down in der safe."

"Would she sell? Would she be willing to put her money into this scheme on your assurance it was perfectly sound?"

"Not on *my* assurance," Mr. Faber had answered quickly.

"How do you mean 'not on *your* assurance'?"

"Not on mine,—never. Put on *yours*. I couldn't—I vouldn't say not'ing to her apout it. I'm her fadder, I know, put I vouldn't advise her. Not me,—put *you; you* could do it. If you vas to marry her, it vould be your say-so as to vat she did vid her money."

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it." Sam spoke with quick impatience.

"I don't see v'y not."

"She's your daughter, and if you think this venture is safe and sound and that, if she goes in, she will benefit herself materially, then I think it's your duty so to advise her."

But to this Mr. Faber had shaken his head vehemently.

"Never—never; I'll never do dat. It's der child's own money, her grandfadder left it to her, und I von't meddle vid it. It's Paula's marriage portion,—der settlement; Tillie und

I have alvays spoken of it as dat; it goes vid her ven she gets married."

That was all that had been said about it then, but the subject had crept back into the men's conversation again within the next few days.

Since the hour in which Mr. Faber had first broached to him the idea of marrying his daughter, Sam had been aware of a growing excitement. The thought of the girl as his wife had been thrilling from the outset; the more he had considered it, the more it appealed to him. He had discovered with a tightening heart that the new rôle into which he had been so precipitously pushed did not appear to make him either ridiculous or ludicrous in the girl's estimation. He began dimly to perceive that the stage was being prepared for something, he did not stop to analyze clearly just what. Opportunities were provided for the young people to know each other better and better; one night there would be perhaps a box party to see "Charley's Aunt" at the Standard. Late in the evening, toward eleven o'clock, he and Mr. Faber would be summoned from their business talk to the dining-room and there would be a supper of cold meat and beer set out, at which Paula and her mother would join them. By some mysterious alchemy the objectionable long-haired admirers and noisy high-school boys who had hitherto danced attendance upon the daughter of the house no longer were in evidence; no longer did Sam find them monopolizing the odd and lovely girl whom daily he came to think more attractive. Life, during these days, had been absorbing; he was feeling his hand at last in the affairs of the business world where for so long he had been an underling; a superbly beautiful girl was being dangled temptingly before his eyes.

Events, trifling, hardly noticeable, had followed one another, with apparently logical sequence. Like moves in a game of chess they seemed; one here, one there, each advancing the pieces nearer the objective point. Fate and the hand of Mrs. Faber directed the play.

That was how it struck Sam, now, lying on his back and studying his friend the fish for probably the last time in his life. One day it had come to him with a shock that he and Paula were practically engaged to be married. It was being expected of him by the girl and by her parents to make a definite declaration, and rather awkwardly, with a thumping

heart, he had done so one memorable evening, and had carried home with him upon his lips the feel of her small red mouth on his own, of her slim young body in his arms. Satisfaction, excitement,—he had known these emotions that night, and many times since. Paula was the loveliest rose in a garden of lovely roses,—an exquisite flower that was being handed over to him to love and cherish. Whenever he stopped to think, it took his breath away.

And directly, urged by the press of circumstances, the girl's money had been discussed between them. If her fiancé advised it and her father approved,—why, of course, she was "more than willing" to turn over to him her bonds, to sell for her and reinvest the proceeds in the new undertaking. Sam had explained with painstaking detail the merits and demerits of the venture, emphasizing the risk of loss. Paula, twisting her head upon her round white throat, had shaken it at him with a perplexed frown, and assured him that she was entirely satisfied to do anything with her money that he advised.

"But I don't 'advise' it, my dear. I want you to decide the matter for yourself," he had begged.

"If you and Papa think it's a good scheme, then, of course, I do, too. . . . Please, Sam,—I don't understand all those figures. You know much more about business than I do. If Papa trusts you, why shouldn't I?"

If they only *wouldn't* trust him so implicitly, Sam used often to think almost with exasperation. Their fortune, their happiness, all they valued in the world, they put into his hands with smiling confidence.

By the middle of March the purchase of the Sampson property was effected, the new owners incorporated under the name of the Atlas Nail & Wire Company. Mr. Boardman Sampson had finally been persuaded to accept thirty-five thousand dollars in cash, the balance in stock, and this had given the new company a working capital of a little over twenty thousand dollars. It was not as much as Sam felt they ought to have, but at least they were independent of outside influence. Mr. Faber was made president, Sam, vice-president and treasurer, Jerry Haines, secretary and superintendent. All agreed to accept minimum salaries at first, or until the new company was a proven success. Sam was satisfied, he told his associates, to leave the operation of the mill,—the manufacturing part of the enterprise,—entirely to their good judgment;

he asked only to be consulted in every circumstance affecting finances, and to be given a free hand in the sales. He made a place in that department for big Harold Webster, and as an inside office man, hired conscientious though fussy Abner Haussmann. There were several others among the old employees of Hartshone & Faber who found positions with the new organization.

It had been a hard, confusing time getting started; so much had to be done at once. Hardesty, the old superintendent, had to be let out; the men, for years identified with the Sampson régime, had to be conciliated and reorganized, the bookkeeping system in use in the old hardware concern had to be inaugurated, the head bookkeeper browbeaten and bullied into its adoption. On the whole, things were going much better than Sam had anticipated. He had been pleased by the way the new ownership was received by Sampson's old customers, and heartened by one or two fairly good orders he had already booked. There was not the shadow of a doubt in his mind as to the ultimate success of the undertaking; Mr. Faber with his dubiousness and Jerry Haines with his conservatism amused, even irritated him at times. There was no question about their being able to make nails, and no question about his ability to sell them, and sell them at a profit. It was the limited capacity of the mill that would hold them back. There was where the weak point in the venture lay; quantity meant big profits. This was as clear to him now as it had been years before, when Narcissa and his mother made orange peel candy up in the old farmhouse. The nail and wire mill must be enlarged, must be doubled, tripled in size; already he was thinking of another plant, perhaps buying a controlling interest in three or four, merging them into one big company. Then he'd be able to show the public how cheaply good nails could be manufactured!

§ 2

And to-day was his wedding day! A Friday! He and Paula planned to spend a brief honeymoon of forty-eight hours at Atlantic City, and he to be back at Bayonne on Monday morning. It was too long a time to be away, just at present,—two whole days from the business,—but there was no help for it. It was no way, he thought in disgust, for a man to

spend his honeymoon, his mind occupied with nails! He knew he'd be thinking about the mill every hour he was at the seashore. Personally, he would have been better satisfied if the wedding had been put off for two or three months, but Paula and her parents seemed to think it best to speed the event, and it wasn't for him to suggest delay. They were to be spared the trouble and nuisance of finding a home of their own immediately. That, at least, was to the good. Since every expenditure was a matter of consideration at the moment, Mr. and Mrs. Faber had proposed that the young couple make their residence with them. It might be for a few months, it might be for a year,—at any rate until Sam and Paula could afford to set up housekeeping for themselves. Paula's bedroom was to be furbished up a bit, and the new husband and wife were to occupy it upon their return from Atlantic City. Small quarters for them, perhaps, but they would do. Any arrangement was satisfactory to Sam. He would have been glad to have taken his bride to Bayonne and found rooms in a boarding-house.

The alarm clock on the washstand suddenly burst into a vibrant whirring. He roused himself with a grunt, and with a quick reach stifled its rattle. The day's program stretched before him, a long, arduous one. There was his marriage, first and foremost; he would have found it much more satisfactory to have devoted the morning, in leisurely fashion, to making ready,—packing, getting his hair cut, and having a Turkish bath, lunching quietly without haste, giving a few hours to reflection and rest. A man, he considered, ought to prepare himself mentally as well as physically for his wedding. Then there were pressing matters at the mill that morning which absolutely demanded his attention: proofs of an announcement to the trade that the printer had promised to have on his desk at nine o'clock, a conference with Haussmann, an interview he had promised Krafts, foreman and spokesman for the men in the shipping-room who had some fancied grievance, and, at eleven o'clock, back in New York at the Everett House, a very important meeting with Mr. Richard J. Harrison, president of the New Jersey Central, from whom he hoped to obtain some concession in freight rates. At that very hour, Narcissa and her little girl would arrive from Boston. He could not meet them, but he had promised to be home by one o'clock, and then she, his uncle and aunt, and himself, would have a quiet,

happy lunch together. How he would have enjoyed showing Narcissa New York, and hearing all about Phineas and Julia and about herself! If he managed a single moment alone with her, they might consider themselves lucky. Sometime during this frightfully congested day he must manage to buy his tickets and his chair-car reservations for Atlantic City, and he must remember to wire the hotel for accommodations. Then there were his belongings,—an accumulation of clothing, shoes, books, and what-not,—which he must pack and arrange to have sent to the Fabers' during his absence. . . . Perhaps this might wait until he returned. . . .

His clothing and the paraphernalia connected with his evening dress, which he was obliged to take with him to Atlantic City, he had partly laid out by seven o'clock. To his dismay, he discovered that, cut down though he would, the one suitcase was not sufficient to hold it all; he would have to purchase another. Both the battered old valises with which he had arrived in New York were too shabby to take anywhere.

He gulped down his coffee and caught the eight o'clock boat that connected with the Bayonne train on the New Jersey side, and was at the mill before nine. The trip, he decided, was going to waste too much time. Perhaps, after a while, Paula would not mind his staying from Monday till Friday in Bayonne, or at least spending two or three nights there a week. If he could work in his office evenings and be on the job again early the next morning he could dispose of many routine matters, give Haussmann and big Harold Webster their instructions, and devote his day to getting orders. It was unfortunate that this difficult period of organization should come just at the time of his marriage. It was going to be hard on Paula; it was going to be hard on himself. He frowned sharply. Life was too strenuous, too exacting! It would take a strong man to accomplish all he had laid out for himself. Well, he was a strong man; if he wasn't, he'd have to make himself one.

He was quarter of an hour late for his appointment at the Everett House, and in consequence Mr. Harrison was disposed to be none too gracious. Sam won him to good humor again by telling him of his wedding plans for the day, and all that he was trying to accomplish at the same time. When the two men parted it was after one; they had had a couple of drinks downstairs at the bar, and Sam was convinced Mr. Harrison

was one of the most intelligent, far-seeing men he had ever met. He hurried on to his uncle's house, light-hearted and jubilant; he had secured the promise of the president of the New Jersey Central for a lower hauling rate than he had dared to hope.

Narcissa, round and buxom, in a brown broadcloth tailor-made suit, greeted him with almost hysterical pleasure. She had grown considerably stouter since her brother had last seen her, but he thought her never better-looking. Her suit was smart and fitted her perfectly,—smooth and wrinkleless,—her hat was dashing and becoming. But in spite of the elegance of her attire, to Sam she was the same old Narciss',—merry, laughing, ebullient,—full of excitement at the least provocation. Mary was a fat, beautiful, silent little girl with gold ringlets cascading down her back and solemn staring blue eyes. Little Sammy, the four-year-old, his mother reported, was in "gorgeous" health and looked the "spitting image" of his uncle and namesake. He was the sweetest baby, she declared, a mother ever had and was as "good as gold."

"And Phineas and Julia?" Sam asked.

"Oh, Phineas is fine, busy, you know, as he always is, making lots of money and rushing round the country. But Ju's not so well. She has a good deal of pain these days and doesn't eat much. She planned to come down with me, you know, but Dr. Moffett wouldn't hear of it. Pat's worried."

Later she confided further details: stones in the kidneys and Moffett thought he'd have to operate, next month, perhaps, certainly before the hot weather.

The luncheon Aunt Sarah had arranged proved a long-drawn-out affair. It was preceded by a lengthy grace pronounced by Uncle Cyrus in his most reverential tone, during which Meggs stood with bowed head in front of the pantry door, the soup tureen balanced on a tray that shook precariously in his old hands. Aunt Sarah, who had never seen Narcissa before and who was clearly impressed by the richness and style of her clothes, was prim and conversational, politely inquiring about each and every member of the family, as well as certain Boston acquaintances. With a sinking heart, Sam presently discovered that the meal was to be one of several courses.

"Not a wedding breakfast exactly, Samuel," Aunt Sarah explained reaching across the corner of the table to pat his

hand, "but the next best thing to it, and the best your old auntie could provide."

He was grateful, praised each dish as it appeared, but at the end of the meat course, with hesitation but determination, he declared he'd *have* to be excused.

"You see, Aunt Sarah, it's after two o'clock already. I've my tickets and reservations to get, and then I have to come back here for my clothes. I promised Paula I'd be up there a good quarter of an hour before four. . . . George! I don't see how I'm going to manage it all! . . ." He drew out his watch and glared at it frowning.

"Oh, let the tickets wait, Samuel, and finish your good dinner. Matty's made your favorite dessert——"

"Sorry, Aunt Sarah, I really *have* to go. There's a stack of things I must attend to *besides* the tickets. Can't be late for my own wedding, you know. . . ."

In another moment he was out of the house, and half running up the street. There was a biting gusty wind in the pale sunshiny spring afternoon, but Sam was conscious only of an irritating heat. His collar chafed his neck, and his best clothes felt binding and uncomfortable. He glanced at his hands and both were grimy, the broad thick finger nails ragged and dark with dirt.

"Damn!" He hid the offending sight by an instinctive fisting.

It would take him a good twenty minutes to get clean and properly dressed. He *couldn't* go to his wedding looking like a tramp! There wasn't nearly enough time to buy the tickets and return to the house to do all that still had to be done! The tickets would have to wait until he and Paula reached the ferry! It was too bad, he'd explain to her, she'd understand!

He stopped short in his tracks and began to retrace his steps. . . . Lord! He hadn't bought that other suitcase! One of the old valises would have to do; he'd use it as far as the Fabers and transfer its contents to something decent they'd have to lend him. Mr. Faber or Eugene was certain to have some kind of hand luggage. . . . Lord! This was no way to get married: hot, flustered, nervous, and excited! Why—it was *ridiculous!*

He cut diagonally across Sixteenth Street and the last half block broke into a run. He reached the steps of his uncle's house, prepared to take them two at a time. A woman stood

hesitating at their foot. He brushed past, jostling her a little in his hurry.

"Sam! . . . Oh, Sammy!"

He swung round and looked straight into her eyes. They stared at one another, the woman's face breaking into one of her old wistful smiles, his own remaining unmoved and expressionless. It was Evelyn!

"Don't you know me, Sammy-boy? It's Ev'; you know Ev'?"

He tried to speak but his throat tightened, a hot tide rose to his face, mounting to his brain. She held out her hand timidly but as he gazed into her pale, pinched face with its wan appeal, its straw-colored brows and lashes, a feeling of resentment, of anger rose within him.

Here she was,—the girl he had loved so deeply, the girl with whom he had lived for nearly a year, the girl with whom he had—had—had . . . oh, had known and struggled and lived everything! Emotion swept him. Here she was,—the girl for whom he had so desperately hungered, the girl who had treated him so shabbily, who had hurt him, and left him for a jangle of dollars! His jaw tightened, the blood pounded in his temples.

"Don't you remember me, Sammy-boy? Don't you remember little ole Ev'?" There were tears behind the hesitating words.

"Sure," he managed gruffly.

"Well—I . . ." Her lip quivered as she looked quickly away up the street.

"Wha'd'you want?"

She turned swimming eyes upon him.

"Oh, nothing." There was an attempt at lightness. "Just happened to get back to New York; thought I'd look you up and see how you was getting along."

"Don't lie," he said, his teeth still shut.

"What—why should I lie for?" she demanded with quick defiance.

Their gaze did not falter for a long minute. Then her eyes fell and the tears she had held back splashed down her cheeks.

"D-don't—don't—don't, Sammy-boy! Don't be mean to me. . . . I came back to find you."

Silence.

"What did you leave me for?"

"Yes, ask me that! . . . Oh, God! I've asked it myself a hundred thousand times." Her words were almost a wail.

"What you doing now?"

She fumbled for a little ball of handkerchief in the bag she carried, trying to see through filmed eyes.

"Getting on all right?" he asked again. His tone had softened.

"Oh, don't you bother about me, Sammy. I'm fine. What about yourself? Still living with your uncle and aunt, hey? I thought I remembered the address. How are they? . . . And how are *you?*"

"You look sick," he said sharply, peering closer.

"I ain't very well. . . . Guess it's the T.B." She tapped her breast significantly.

"You mean you have lung trouble?"

She shrugged. Now he saw she was shabby, haggard, drabbled-looking.

"Oh, that's what some of the wise birds say, but personally I don't believe they know a thing about it. Don't make no diff'. Guess if I had a good square meal——"

"You're not *hungry*, are you?"

"Well-l, I've played in a bit of hard luck lately."

Sam reached for his wallet.

"Oh, I ain't taking it from *you.*"

"You got to."

"Well-l, I ain't. You chase yourself. . . ."

"Ev', you do what I tell you!" He seized her hand and closed her fingers about a twenty-dollar bill.

"Still the same old bossy Sammy-boy. . . ."

Suddenly, yearning crept into her voice.

"I threw my whole life away, Sammy, when I ran away from you. I ain't had a happy moment since. My God, how good you was to me. You was always square, Sammy, an' you always treated me square. You, I guess, are the only guy I ever knew who wanted nothin' out of me but just me. . . . Do you ever go by the old Christopher Street place? I did the other day, and . . . oh, Sammy, . . . it was somethin' *fierce!* I left some big part of me up there in that room, Sammy, an' I'll never get it back. . . . Gosh, we were happy! . . . What a fool—what a blind, blithering little fool I was!"

His face stiffened, teeth clicked; he scowled at her from under knit brows.

"I'm getting married this afternoon, Evelyn," he said slowly, harshly. "I'm getting married in just about half an hour."

She straightened sharply, sniffed, pressed her lips firmly together, winked, glancing up at the face of the house.

"In here?" she asked lightly.

"No; at—at the girl's home."

"Well,—I wish you all kinds of luck, Sammy-boy. Lots of it."

She held out her hand to him at once, smiling brightly. He took it and she gave it a squeeze.

"Good luck," she repeated; "wish you every joy."

She pulled quickly away and hurried up the street. He stepped down on the sidewalk, watching her until she came to the corner of Irving Place. Then she disappeared without a single backward glance. For a moment he stared after her. Then suddenly snatched at his watch.

"Good God!" he said, in disgust. *"Half past three!"*

§ 3

"Samuel, wilt thou have this Woman to be thy wife, and wilt thou pledge thy troth to her, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with her and cherish her, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage?"

"I will."

The room was hot, suffocating with furnace heat, an oppressive silence of many watching people filled it; only the deep bass oratorical tones of the minister's voice broke the stillness. Sam noted how the man's sharp eyes gleamed from beneath the white hairs of his shaggy eyebrows as he bent his leonine head. His accents were grave, ingratiating, almost caressing. The bridegroom felt that in some way the venerable gentleman was conferring a favor upon him. Paula, tall and beautiful beside him, seemed an alien person,—somebody he did not know at all,—mysterious in white veilings. He was being married! An inclination to laugh suddenly caught him. The absurdity of it struck him as intensely funny.

Dr. McIntosh prompted him kindly.

"I, Samuel, take thee, Paula, to be my wedded wife; and I

do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband. . . ."

He bungled with the ring and attempted to put it on the wrong finger. Paula corrected him by poking forward the right one. The glimpse of his own hands shocked him; they were callous, coarse, knuckly, like an animal's paws holding the girl's long white exquisite fingers; even the vigorous scrubbing had left them none too clean; the nails were in sorry shape, broken, stubbed, the cuticle about them rough and ragged. . . . He wished heartily the wretched business was over.

"Let us pray."

The Almighty's blessing was sought. Doctor McIntosh's marvelous voice in its earnest supplication possessed the deep rumbling resonance of an organ. In the midst of his invocation, one of the strings of Paula's harp snapped with a loud, pinging sound.

As they rose from their knees, the clergyman held out to the bride a leviathan hand, shook hers gently, smiling blandly. Sam looked on awkwardly.

"Kiss me," Paula whispered through moveless lips, lifting her mouth.

At once there broke out a small hubbub. A blow smote the groom's shoulder. It was Mr. Faber; his eyes were glistening, his cheeks wet, tears hung pendent from the hairs of his thick mustache.

"My poy, my poy!" he cried gutturally. "Golly mike, I'm happy. I got a fine son-in-law. I t'ank God."

He passed on to his daughter, flinging his arms roughly about the white loveliness that enveloped her, straining her to him, sobs in his voice.

"My paby, my paby,—my leedle own darling paby!"

"Oh, Papa,—don't. You're mussing me—*dreadfully*."

Mrs. Faber, with radiant eyes, confronted Sam.

"My son," she said simply and kissed him on both cheeks.

A circle of hands reached for his. He was hugged, pushed about, beaten upon the back, kissed. His cheeks ached from constant grinning. By the window, Miss Behlow was in hysterics. She was sobbing loudly, and two or three people were trying to still her noise. Narcissa encircled him with large arms and kissed him warmly several times.

"She's beautiful, Sam; oh, she's be-*uuu*-tiful!"

"*I* think she is."

"You've got a lovely, lovely wife. I congratulate you, Sammy dear. . . . Too bad about Mary; the poor child was scared to death."

Narcissa's little daughter had been impressed at the last moment into the wedding procession. It had been Gertrude Behlow's idea, Sam learned later. Mary, bearing the ring on a small red plush cushion, had appeared a little in advance of the bride, who came in upon her father's arm to the strains of her brother's violin and the wedding march. Half-way across the room, little Mary's eyes had wandered and encountered the close circle of watching faces, the cushion had tilted and the ring rolled to the floor. Sam, standing beside his uncle and the minister, had had one horrified moment, but someone's quick hand had rescued the gold fillet, had passed it to Uncle Cyrus who had produced it at the proper moment.

"It didn't in the least matter," Sam now assured Narcissa. "I thought Mary looked mighty sweet, and she *was* brave not to cry."

"I've lost my boy,—and a dear good boy he's been." It was Aunt Sarah bustling up. She, too, had wet eyes, and the feel of her wintry cheek against his lips reminded her nephew of the first time he had kissed it.

"Isn't Dr. McIntosh remarkable?" Again Aunt Sarah. "So kind, so generous of him to be here to marry them. He told your uncle he was most happy to do it. He's *such* a busy man, you know."

Eugene, bearing a large tray of champagne glasses, made an appearance.

"Out of the way, please;—look out, everybody. . . . *Please* look out of the way! . . . Take the first glass, Sam. . . . For heaven's sake, *take* it!"

"Dis is Paul Roget, Sam, my poy, vintage '78. Been saving it for dis day since Paula vas a leedle bit of a girl. . . . Vell, ve drink to der bride,—to Mrs. Samuel Schmidt! . . . Cum on, everypody!"

A maid steered a precarious way through the groups, bearing another tray of cakes, sandwiches, and fringed napkins.

Sam drained his goblet gratefully. The calves of his legs ached, he felt tired and suffocating.

"Can't we have a window open here?"

"Sure; v'y not? 'Genie, open der vindow."

"Oh,—it's really quite sharp outside. I don't think I'd do that, Julius."

"T'ink it's too hot in here, Doctor?"

"Well-ll, no-o; can't say I find it so."

"Have a glass of vine, Doctor?"

"No-o, no more. Had one, you know; that's quite enough for me."

"Wasn't Paula beautiful?"

"Just too beautiful for anything."

"She's a beautiful girl."

"Well, she *ought* to have made a beautiful bride."

"And a beautiful wife! Hey, Sam?"

"She's beautiful, all right."

"It went off very well indeed."

"Oh, I think it was a *lovely* wedding."

"I simply adore small weddings. Church weddings are awful. You can't see a thing. I believe nobody ought to be asked to a wedding but the immediate family."

"I'm afraid some of Paula's friends are going to feel hurt."

"I shouldn't care. You can't ask everybody,—and the house wouldn't hold more."

"The only person I'm sorry wasn't here is Fluff."

"Who's that rather stout, florid looking woman over there?"

"Why, that's Sam's sister. She came down all the way from Boston."

"From the Hub, hey? Well, they dress pretty well up there if *she's* an example. That's an awfully smart looking tailor-made; it's quite stunning. She looks like Sam,—doesn't she?"

"Going to throw your bouquet, Paula?"

"They're only two girls here, and Winifred's engaged, so I'm going to *give* it to 'Trude Behlow."

"Hope it gets her something."

"Sss-hhhh,—she'll hear you!"

Sam found himself alone, twirling the stem of his empty glass. No one was paying him any attention. He felt neglected. The room was a babble of voices. There was one group about Paula, another about Dr. McIntosh. His father-in-law and his uncle were near at hand, the former talking with special emphasis.

". . . A *man,*—dat's vat he is,—a man among men. Dat poy's going to make his vay in der vorld, you mark my vords.

Dey'll hear apout him von of dese days down on Vall Street, und dey'll hear apout him all over dis country. I tell you I'm proud, I'm glad,—oh, by golly mike, I'm *terribly* glad he's in der family. . . . You knew he saved me? Pulled me out of a pusiness dat vas going on der rocks? You heard apout dat yet? Und den he makes me puy a new von, and I t'ink dis von's going to be goot. Oh, he's a smart von, dat nephew of yours. It vas a mighty lucky day for me ven he came round to der old place looking for a job. He's chust der kind of a husband for Paula. Dey vas made for each udder. She's kind of flighty, you know, put Sam, he's level-headed. No highfalootin' notions about him. You pet not! He's got his feet on der ground. A fine feller,—yes, sir, a fine feller. . . ."

"He's always been a good boy. I think he's steady. No bad habits, I know of." Uncle Cyrus's commendation was guarded.

Sam moved out of ear-shot; he wanted to find Narcissa and have a few minutes alone with her. They discovered two unoccupied chairs in the dining-room.

"I hope you're going to be happy, Sam. You deserve a good wife. . . . Perhaps I do wrong to mention it, but I won't see you again for goodness knows how long, Sam, and I've often wondered—often thought about the other girl——"

Sam scowled.

"——Do you ever hear from her? How does she like her missionary work? Is she likely to stay over there?"

"Oh, you mean Ruth?"

"Yes, Ruth. Are you all over that, Sam? You can tell me, my dear. I've wondered so often about you and her."

He smiled indulgently. "Oh, that's over long ago."

"You're sure, if she came back, you wouldn't find it hard?"

"Absolutely."

"Sure, now? Wasn't she very much in love with you?"

"My dear Sis',—that affair is as dead as Julius Cæsar."

"Well, I'm glad, Sam, I'm awfully glad. You've got a very beautiful wife. I don't think I ever saw a handsomer girl in my whole life."

Mr. Faber discovered them.

"Hey, Sam, my poy, have anudder glass of champagne vid me; chust you und me, hey? Here's do der pusiness, und everyt'ing."

"This is my third, Mr. Faber. I have to go slow."

"Say, ain'd he der limit? I'm his fadder, now, und he calls me 'Mister'! V'y don't you call me 'Papa' like der rest of der family, or 'Julius' like some of my ole friends?"

"Can't get 'round to it, I guess."

"Vell you got to practice. . . . Cum on, now; chust a leedle toast,—chust you und me."

Eugene came in from the hall.

"There's a tray of cold chicken and some potato salad in my room, Sam. Mama had it put in there for you because you won't get anything else till you reach Atlantic City. Paula's having hers in Mama's room where she's changing. Mama said for me to tell you to watch the time."

"I'll have to hurry. . . . Say, Eugene,—you haven't a decent looking bag or suitcase you could lend me?" He led the young man away, explaining his predicament.

"Sure, the very thing."

Together they hurried upstairs.

§ 4

Half an hour later, as Sam was closing the borrowed bag upon his belongings, his father-in-law put his head in through the door.

"Der carriage is all ready, my poy,—und so is der bride!" He laughed jocosely and took hold of the handles of Sam's luggage. "I'll take dese down und put 'em in der carriage. 'Genie's got Paula's. She's saying good-bye to her mama, now."

Sam hurried to their room. She was in her mother's arms; tears were on both their faces.

"Here he is, now," Mrs. Faber said. She caught her daughter to her again, shut her eyes tight as she kissed her, then kissed Sam. "Be off with you, now," she said unsteadily, "and Heaven bless you, both."

There was a scramble, a shout, laughter, shrill cries, a general pushing, a rush through the hall, a shower of rice, and a plunge down the front steps.

"Good-bye, Paula."

"Good luck, Sam."

"Good-bye, Miss Faber . . . oh, I called her '*Miss* Faber'!"

In the street there was a gathering of small boys and women. An interested policeman pretended to be keeping these in order. Eugene stood holding open the carriage door. With a sinking of the heart, Sam saw that the vehicle was decorated with white satin ribbons. A horrible sign, "We are just married!" dangled from the rear axle, and another, "Married!" was affixed to the carriage's back. He and Paula made a dash across the sidewalk, and Eugene slammed the door after them. Two girls rushed to the carriage window, rapped on the glass with their gloved knuckles, peering in.

"Good-bye, Paula. Good-bye—good-bye—good-bye!"

"Good luck, Paula. Wish you all kinds of luck!"

The carriage jerked, lurched forward. Shouts and cries filled the street. Sam, glancing back through the tiny square glass pane in the back of the coach, could see the guests streaming out of the house. The windows had been opened and were choked with their heads, the front doorway and stoop were crowded; all were waving and calling after them. Paula's mother and father were standing together; Mr. Faber had his arm about his wife and was mopping his eyes with a handkerchief. Pedestrians stopped along the sidewalks and stood gaping with silly grins on their faces. One or two catcalls arose and a man waved his hat. Every instant the vehicle gathered headway and presently was rattling briskly down the street, the din growing fainter and fainter.

"Ooooo—God!" Sam pushed his hat on the back of his head, brushed his damp forehead with the side of his hand, and ran a finger around the inside of his collar. He was suffering intensely with discomfort. Leaning across the luggage that had slid against his knees, he rapped on the front glass of the carriage. The coachman bent down, reining in the horses to a slower pace.

"Drive into a side street and let's get rid of these damn ribbons," shouted Sam.

The carriage turned at the next corner and stopped half way down the block. Sam jumped out and with the coachman's aid, stripped the vehicle of its telltale banners.

"Who do you suppose was responsible for all this silly nonsense?" He spoke irritably, expecting no answer.

"You'd better get out and shake that rice from your dress," he continued, holding out his hand to assist his wife to alight. Then, for the first time, he noticed Paula was crying.

§ 5

There were no seats left in any of the chair cars on the Atlantic City Express. There'd be room in the day coaches, the man at the window informed them. A porter helped them with their four bags and Paula's paste-board hat box, and these were piled on a narrow seat in the corner of the car, while Sam and his bride established themselves on another,—a plush and dusty one,—close by. The car rapidly filled; soon there were few seats left, and late comers, threading their way through the train, eyed the luggage in the corner seat with resentful glances. Whenever anyone passed, Paula pretended to look out of the window; Sam appeared to consult his watch or time-table. They assumed no interest in the offending baggage. Presently the train shuddered, strained, creaked, and began slowly to slide forward. Sam drew a deep breath of relief. "Guess they'll let us alone, now. I'm sure I don't know what we'd have done with our stuff if we'd been made to move it."

Paula merely nodded and continued to look out of the window.

"I should think they'd hook a dining-car on to this train," he observed after a moment. "You know they have 'em on some of the fast trains between New York and Chicago, now. They save a lot of time; you don't have to get out and eat."

"I shouldn't care if there was one on here or not," she said presently with a little quick sigh. "I'm not a bit hungry. I'm just tired,—tired to death."

§ 6

The night air was cold, wet, and strong with the smell of the sea. Lights, a myriad of lights, glowed like tiny suns through mist and fog. Recurrently came the pound and swash of the breakers. The asphalt pavement, black and shining, reflected the glow of a few fire signs, gas jets, and sputtering arc lamps, alternating with deep shadows. The hotel bus, its seats carpet lined, lumbered and creaked along the deserted streets. A few bundled figures hurried past dimly lit windows, and occasional shuttered shops.

"Lord, this is kind of dismal," Sam whispered. He put his hand over his wife's, peering into the night through the blurred glass panes of the bus' windows. The other passengers sat muffled and silent, hugging their wraps.

There was plenty of brightness about the great wooden barrack that was their hotel. Brilliance radiated from its windows in shafts and pencils of light piercing the wet blackness outside. Porters came hurrying from a streaming doorway, as the bus backed against the curb, helping the new arrivals to alight, taking charge of hand luggage. Within, was a welcoming atmosphere of cheerful hospitality, instantly heartening. Tall lamps in red shades diffused soft pools of ruddiness on rich hangings, upholstery and carpets. Gas jets twinkled in gold and crystal chandeliers. The desk clerk beamed upon the late arrivals with a bland and cheerful smile, offering the butt end of a pen-holder, pushing forward the registry for signatures. A few men in evening dress, ensconced comfortably in heavy leather chairs, ceased murmuring and threw the new guests idle, inspecting glances.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Smith, we had your wire, and 're all prepared for you. . . . Front: three seventy-five."

Sam followed his wife and the laden bell-boy toward the elevator. Heads and eyes of the loungers turned in Paula's wake. Her husband's heart swelled. He glanced at her figure preceding him. By George, she *was* a beauty,—tall, slim, graceful, superb! Under the inspection of the hotel lobby, she bore herself splendidly; her clothes were new and of the latest fashion, her gay, flowered hat Frenchy and dashing; she wore it with an air. A wife in a million, Sam thought; she'd always be admired, envied by women, courted by men. And she was his,—*his* wife! Nobody could take her away from him now!

The room was satisfactory under Sam's quick appraising eye. It was a very good room, in fact. The furniture was bird's-eye maple and there were heavy Nottingham lace curtains at the tall windows, a plush lambrequin and a bronze clock on the wooden mantel above the imitation fireplace. The broad bed had a ruffled counterpane and ruffled shams covered the stiff pillows. The bell-boy deposited the bags, loosened straps, pocketed a quarter, and departed.

Sam helped Paula off with her coat, took charge of her hat and put it on the bare shelf of the wardrobe. Then he turned to his own luggage, unpacked his dress suit and hung it up.

Paula was busy with her own things. He commenced whistling carelessly.

"I think they have treated us rather decently," he observed.

"Yes," she answered indifferently.

What had happened to her usual vivacity? She was always so gay, so sparkling. It came to him that all day she had been subdued, silent. He glanced at her. She was only a child, after all, a little girl with a little girl's heart, grown up overnight to womanhood. Beautiful, imperious, confident in her bearing though she might be, he suspected that inside just now, she was like a frightened bird, a bird caught and imprisoned in a large human hand, held fast, though gently, its heart quaking with terror of the unknown. He had perhaps been inconsiderate; he should long ago have considered her probable feelings.

He went to her, now, and putting his arms about her, drew her to him and kissed her. She stared up at him, her eyes wide.

"You're beautiful, Paula; do you realize how beautiful you are?"

He patted her gently, and touched her cheek again with his lips.

"I'm going downstairs for a cigar," he told her. "I generally like to smoke for a few minutes before I turn in. You can undress and get to bed. I know you're dead tired. . . . It's been a terribly hard day for you,—and you need a good long night's sleep. I'll be back in about half an hour."

Once more he kissed her cheek, and patted her shoulder. With an encouraging smile, he departed.

Poor child! He was sorry she was frightened. He did not know how to reassure her. The idea of the bird caught in the hand came to him again; he thought of its throbbing heart, its whole frail tremulous little body shaking with fear. . . . Well, he'd leave her to herself for a little while, give her a chance to get undressed without his being in the room, and then he'd go up, pet her a bit, and turn in.

At the news-stand he bought himself a cigar and a copy of the *Commercial Advocate*, established himself in one of the luxurious leather chairs and opened the paper. At once he turned to the financial column and read the stock market report. He had great faith in the opinion of the writer of this column. He did not know his name but he read what he

had to say off and on. The man had clear insight and sound business judgment. He read:

It is surprising how prices make sentiment even among the cool-headed and less ignorant of observers. In truth prices have far more effect on sentiment at times than sentiment has upon prices. The present advance in the stock market is a particularly good example of this. Those who are accustomed in season and out of season, to see but one side, and forever lean with loving persistency on the usual platitudes about "recovery," "pessimism," and so on, are now becoming positively enthusiastic over the advance. One of the observers, more intelligent as a rule than the rest, professes to trace in the present market for stocks, signs of similarity to the market in 1879 when the great advance started. To say that the country is recovering is to utter a truism of a particularly commonplace kind.

Further on he noted:

Baltimore advices say that in order to give protection to the pig iron trade of the south, the Southern Railway and Steamship Association has made a reduction in freight rates to Buffalo, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, and adjacent territory. The producers in Birmingham and Chattanooga districts will be benefited to the extent of 65 cents per ton to Chicago.

His eye caught another paragraph on the same page:

The Davis Mercantile Agency reports the number of failures in the United States for the past week as 290 and 26 in Canada against 338 in the United States for the preceding week and 60 in Canada. . . . Money on call in London 1 at 1¼%; rates of discount in open market for short and 3 mos. bills 1⅛ at ¼%.

All this was encouraging. Things were picking up,—they were *bound* to pick up,—the pendulum always swung in the opposite direction. It might take time,—a year or two,—but good times were ahead. A boom in industrials was certainly on the way. The newspaper slid into his lap, and Sam looked across the lobby with eyes fixed and unseeing, but the eyes of his mind were gazing straight and far into the future, and he saw a vision. Nails, tin, iron, steel,—it was to be an age of structural material. Andrew Carnegie down in Pittsburgh was leading the way. That canny Scotchman had foresight and wisdom. Sam needed no better guide. *Money*,—that was what he needed! *Money*,—that was what he must have! Lend him the money, and he would build a fortune. The day,

the hour, was at hand. Now was the time,—the psychological moment! . . . Where could he put his hands on fifty thousand dollars,—on twenty,—on five?

In his intentness, his hands gripped fiercely the arms of his chair, and the joints creaked complainingly. The slight sound roused him. Over the desk the hotel clock met his eye. *Quarter to twelve!* Good Lord! He'd been sitting there in a trance for almost an hour!

He strode across the lobby, leaped up the broad stairs,—no time for the elevator,—and hurried down the corridor of his floor to his room. Softly turning the knob, he looked in, then entered, shutting the door ever so gently behind him.

As he feared, Paula was asleep, her hair in a thick braided tress like a black snake across the pillow, one bare arm flung out, the lace of her nightgown a tumbled mass of delicate white froth against the lovely warmth of her skin. Her face was matchless in its perfection with its fringe of inky lashes like two small vivid black-etched scimitars edging either eyelid, with its nose straight and delicate, its small red mouth,—cherry red the lips were,—its warm flush that burned on the high cheek bones. She lay, young loveliness personified, incarnate beauty, virginal, immaculate, exquisite, awaiting her lover. Sam stood at the foot of the bed in the dim light of the room gazing down upon the unconscious figure. For some moments he did not move. Then a frown slowly darkened his heavy brow, and his upper lip caught the one beneath. And it was not of the lovely vision that lay before him that he was thinking, but of a thin, pale, pinched face with a wistful smile and glistening blue eyes, and in his ears he heard again a voice: "Guess if I had a good, square meal. . . . Oh, I ain't taking it from *you*. . . . Well, I wish you luck, Sammy-boy."

CHAPTER XXII

§ 1

It was June when Sam and Paula went to live in Bayonne by the Kill Von Kull. He took her first to the La Tourette House, and she admitted the place had charm. The lower end of Bayonne was a beautiful spot in the mid-'nineties. Tally-hoes and other equipages were driven down along the Jersey shore, their occupants enjoyed a gay luncheon at the La Tourette or the Riverside Casino, they watched the boating from the porches, and drove home again. The Kill was spotted all day long with tiny white triangles of sails, with rowboats and puffing little tugs and steamers. Beyond its churning tide lay Port Richmond, and the green rolling expanse of Staten Island with one lovely home, surrounded by gardens, lawns, and gracious trees, adjoining another.

Sam found, soon after his return from his honeymoon, that commuting between the mill and his father-in-law's house took up far too much time. He was obliged to spend many evenings in his office. Dictation, matters of administration, various petty affairs demanded his attention; he could not delegate these to subordinates or leave them to his associates. Unless he disposed of such concerns at night or in the early morning, they ate into his day, and left him small time for soliciting. His place, he knew, was on the road, scouting for more business.

Paula had not been any too cheerful about going to live in the country. She was a pleasure-loving creature; she liked the theaters, and Broadway, and loved having tea with girl friends at the Waldorf, to watch all the world file past through "Peacock Alley." Sam talked very earnestly to her during the early days of their marriage and tried to make her understand his hopes, ambitions, and the ultimate goal at which he was driving.

"You must be patient for a few years, sweetheart," he told

her. "We'll have to live simply and save money. If you're willing to do that for a while, Paula, my dear, you'll be able to gratify your heart's desire by and by. It will take time, but eventually we're going to be rich people. . . ."

Her father and mother supported Sam whole-heartedly in this urge for economy; they strove to reduce expenses in every way possible. The faithful henchwoman, Christina, who had been with the family for six years, was dismissed; only Hulda, the cook, remained; Eugene's violin lessons had been discontinued, and now every day he walked down to Union Square where he had a position behind the counter of Schirmer's music store. Paula did not take easily to retrenchment and self-denial, but she honestly wanted to do her part.

Since their marriage Sam had grown very fond of his beautiful and brilliant wife. She was a capricious woman, but she possessed, for him, a great deal of charm. Certain little-girl qualities about her never failed to move him. She could be tremendously amusing, he discovered, capable of the most ridiculous antics, was an admirable mimic, and had at her command a vocabulary that constantly surprised him. In social amenities, in what she had picked up about books, music, and pictures, even about politics and European affairs, he found her singularly well informed. She made no pretense of knowledge about these things; it had come to her quite as naturally as it had to her mother. But it was the affectionate side of her nature that stirred her husband most. Tall though she was, she could curl up into his lap, lay her head upon his shoulder, twine her arms about his neck, and cover his cheek and chin with shy, little pecking kisses that never failed to send his heart knocking against his throat, and bring the prick of hurting, loving tears to his eyes. Such a child she was! Such a little girl! Such a baby! . . . When Paula was this way with him, he was ready to give her anything in the world, to concede her whatever she might want; at such times she was his mistress, she ruled him, owned him, had him in her power; and he derived some curious kind of satisfaction in knowing that it was so.

Yet with all her complexity, Paula was a reasonable and a conscientious soul. Again and again he found he could safely trust her sense of rightness and fitness. Thus it had been about the move to Bayonne. She had no desire to live there; in fact, she hated the prospect, but she listened to what he had

to say, and there had been no need for further urging. He had predicted she would like the New Jersey suburb, and she had been fair about acknowledging it. Bayonne, in those days, had a quality of peaceful beauty, of trees and shady roads, of flowers and bees, of "countryness" and husbandry, of lovely gardens and secure serenity.

"The factory *does* look out of place here," she told him when first she viewed its smoky, brick exterior, its menacing black chimney stack and the corrugated iron roofs of its outlying buildings. "I don't wonder the local residents objected to the Sampsons erecting it."

"But look at the approaches by water," Sam pointed out. "We can bring coal here by barge through the Kill clear from Brooklyn, and some day we'll get the State Legislature to dredge the channel so we'll be able to load steamers from the end of our own wharf. The site's too important commercially to be taken up by dwellings. . . . Progress, my dear; you can't stand in the way of progress. These old moss-backs had better make up their minds to pack up and move. The old Standard Oil Company will show them a thing or two. All 'round here will be factories some day."

After a night or two at the La Tourette, Sam and his wife took up their residence in a boarding-house, not far from the factory, which was run by a likable, buxom soul, known to her paying guests and to the neighborhood as "Babe" Baxter. The lady's correct name was Mrs. Lyman Hollister Baxter, and her husband conducted a precarious, bucket-shop business in the shadow of Wall Street. Mr. Baxter was handsome, corpulent, lazy, and at times intemperate. His wife viewed his failing in this regard with, what Sam considered, happy conjugal tolerance.

" 'Sleep it off where you get it, Ly',' I says to him," she used to confide to anyone who might listen, " 'sleep it off where you get it; don't bring it home with you.' And, will y'believe me?" she would invariably add in a confidential whisper, "I never seen Ly' with a jag in my life!"

Babe was a wholesome creature, inclined to plumpness like her husband. With a remarkably clear eye, a fresh skin, she was distinctly a good-looking woman; she dressed with both dash and knowingness, and conducted an excellent boarding-house. Its inmates were a curious collection of cloak models, typists, actresses out of work, young unmarried men, and a

sprinkling of more substantial couples who patronized the Baxter establishment, summer after summer. Babe accepted boarders only from May until October. She boasted she made several hundred dollars during these months, and in wintertime she moved to the city where, as she described it, she "blew in her dough and lived a real sport's life." Her Bayonne home was gay, frequently noisy, poker games occasionally were in order, bottles of beer made an appearance once in awhile, and the young people gathered in the evenings about the piano and shouted popular rag-time songs.

> My gal's a high-born lady,
> She's dark but not too shady.

That was as far as the frivolity went. Sam and Paula occupied a front bedroom on the top floor and shared an adjoining bathroom with a couple across the hall. For this accommodation and their meals they paid twelve dollars a week.

It was a satisfaction to Sam to observe his wife's popularity in the motley group. The gold harp remained at the Faber home, but Paula also played the piano and she was constantly being called upon to try some new song. She was a favorite with all the men, with Babe Baxter and many of the older women; only the cloak models and the typists and actresses out of work betrayed their envy by the shortness of their manner whenever she took the center of the stage, and she was always taking it. It was not that she sought it, but whenever she entered a room or joined a group it was accorded her, and she accepted it as naturally as she accepted her height or the color of her hair.

In this atmosphere, Sam first had occasion to note her effect on men, her manner with them and their attitude towards her. Paula challenged masculine admiration both consciously and unconsciously. If he and she happened to be alone together and a man appeared or Paula so much as caught a glimpse of one at a distance, whether he was known to her or not, instantly a change came over her. Sam was not jealous. Indeed, Paula gave him no reason for jealousy. At the same time, he did not admire the way in which she bridled in other men's presence. He considered it neither dignified nor becoming and told her so without hesitation. She did not resent his reproaches. Sitting on his knees, she would pout, and regard

him with dark solemn eyes while he gently admonished her, and then she would fling her arms around his neck, bury her face against his shoulder, and whisper into his neck, between disarming kisses, that he was an old bear. Beyond her bridling and self-conscious stiffening, there was nothing in her behavior with which he could find fault. The men courted her, they flattered her, they ran after her, she was a favorite with them all, but Paula was essentially good; she had been brought up intelligently and wisely by an intelligent and wise woman, and as she had been a good daughter, so now she was a good wife. She would not flirt with these young men, she would grant them no favors nor encourage their advances. Her husband, observing her, was gratified. Paula had poise, she had power, she could control a situation, men dared not be too free in her presence; they realized that Paula was the type of woman with whom liberties were not taken.

Plodding home along the shore from the factory toward six o'clock in the evening, his mind absorbed with details, details, details, Sam would suddenly catch sight of his wife coming to meet him. She made it a habit to saunter along under the pepper trees at this hour. Sometimes his first glimpse of her would take his breath away: her beauty was dazzling! Always she wore white,—muslin, dotted swiss, fine linen,—long sweeping garments they were with voluminous skirts that trailed on the ground. These she caught up and carried in one hand, and twirled a yellow parasol in the other, carrying the sunshade jauntily over her shoulder. Around her slender waist was wrapped a broad white satin ribbon, and another encircled her throat. In her belt she usually tucked a yellow rose or a few marigolds. She never wore a hat; her hair, glistening like a black raven's wing, rose high and smooth in a great sweep above her forehead. People gazed after her as she walked slowly along in the tree shade beside the road, the occupants of passing vehicles craned their necks. She was aware of the mild sensation she created, but she betrayed no hint of it nor gave heed to one admiring glance. She was an actress, as Sam already was aware, but not until he came to know her well did he appreciate how much of an actress she was.

One particular phase of her nature bothered him; it made him self-conscious and uncomfortable. Paula was artistic. She liked to write, she liked to draw, she liked to "pretend"

when in certain moods. Sometimes she would maintain one for several hours, and there was no way in which he could persuade her to abandon it. He suspected she sometimes fancied herself another entity entirely: a woman perhaps whom she had seen step from her carriage and enter the hotel, or the heroine of a story she was reading. She kept a diary which she filled with weird and nonsensical thoughts about herself. Once when he happened to enter their room with unintentional stillness, he found her posing before the bureau mirror, a dark crimson curtain which had hung before the closet, wrapped tightly around her, her hair bound up in a queer manner, waving her bare arms slowly above her head, bending her body in serpentine fashion, striking attitudes. Sometimes he would catch her watching him critically though kindly, and when his eyes met hers, she would smile and give him an indulgent head shake.

"Hopeless," she would say, gesturing mock despair.

"What d'y' mean?" he would demand.

"Oh, nothing." He would insist upon an explanation.

"It's just that you're so—so 'whole cloth and a yard wide,'" she would admit, slipping her arms about his neck.

"I still don't know what you're driving at, my dear."

"Well, you wouldn't," she would say, kissing him in her quick little pecking fashion.

"You're be-uuu-ti-ful!" she would tell him.

"Come on, now," he would remonstrate, "don't talk silly." He would strain her to him tilting back her head and kissing the soft little depression at the base of her throat, thrilling, as this act always thrilled him, with tingling tremors.

Happy days of love and living these were. They respected and admired one another, they found pleasure in each other's company, they regretted partings and looked forward to reunions; they loved. Nights were nights of ecstasy and enthralldom. It was hot under the roof, but there was a broad casement window through which a salt breeze tripped toward midnight; music tinkled from unseen pianos, there was usually singing down by the shore, the plunk of a guitar, a Negro's chant, the puff and blinking lights of a tug or the Port Richmond ferry, happy bantering voices, girls' laughter, the silvery sheen of moon and stars mirrored in ruffled waters.

"Paula,—do you love me?"

No answer.

"Paula,—tell me: do you *love* me?"

Still silence.

"Paula, answer me!" A compelling squeeze.

"Goodness gracious, Sam! Don't be so rough!"

"Well, tell me."

She wriggles back into his arms.

"Don't be a goose," she murmurs, her lips against his neck.

"I want to know."

Again silence.

With a shrug he dislodges her from his shoulder, and with hands close around her arms, holds her erect.

"Now, answer me."

"I won't."

"You got to."

"I'll bite!"

"Bite away, you cat, but tell me first you love me."

He shakes her gently in his grasp.

"Do you?"

The long fringes fan upward, the black eyes search his, their look is of the night, of tenderness, of love, of surrender.

"Ah, Sam,—you know I do."

With a long breath she sinks upon his chest and his strong arms gather her to him, their lips find each other's, and he crushes his to hers.

§ 2

It was during this first summer in Bayonne that Sam's sister, Julia, died, and that Ruth came home on her long deferred vacation. Narcissa wrote him at length the sad details of the former event; the operation which all the doctors agreed could not possibly be further postponed, had been performed under the most favorable conditions and had seemed entirely successful, but four days following it, Julia had passed into a delirium and rapidly succumbed. Pat Brennan was going to erect a very imposing mausoleum in Mt. Auburn Cemetery for her resting place, and her art collection, which the papers all mentioned as both "rare" and "valuable" was to be given to the Boston Museum.

"That old flame of Julia's," added Narcissa in a postscript, "Karl Schlegel was in the church. He looks a perfect scare-

crow and was dreadfully broken up. I suppose he cared for her all these years. Poor Julia!"

Sam was unable to meet the steamer that brought Ruth back from her long exile, but he and Paula on the evening of the day she arrived, went over to his uncle's house to greet her. She had not changed; it was surprising how little altered she was. He had supposed the rugged, arduous life she had lived for four years would have left some mark behind it, but when he made some mention of this she smiled in amusement.

"It isn't 'wild' or 'rugged' at all. You haven't an idea how comfortable we are. We live the simplest, the happiest of lives. Nothing ever happens and we just go on from day to day doing our work and helping our poor black friends. Oh, you don't know how thrilling, how interesting it is!"

If she had not changed in the manner Sam expected, there was a change in her, nevertheless. He began to notice it after they had talked a while. He could not find a name for it at first; she had acquired some curious quality of detachment; she appeared to view life, the tumult of events around her, New York's mad gallop, world happenings, her uncle and aunt, himself, with a sort of interested aloofness, as if she found them diverting, but in no way affecting her. With this was a calm serenity, an unruffled temper. Sam studied her critically. She was as different from Paula as white from black, and yet, how easily he might have married her! It was hard to imagine that old feeling for her which once had swayed him. She was in no way the type of woman he admired, and yet four years ago, he had been very much in love with her. Now, he admired her, was extremely fond of her,—Ruth was a fine girl, a *glorious* girl,—but the old attraction was, as he had told Narcissa on his wedding day, "dead as Julius Cæsar."

Uncle Cyrus and Aunt Sarah were in a flutter of excitement over Ruth's presence. They hung upon her words, their eyes never left her face, and a small rivalry arose between them in waiting upon her. Constantly they urged her to recite again some of the experiences, with which she had already regaled them.

"Tell Sam about that time you bicycled right into a lion."

"Tell Sam that story about the night you lost your way in the jungle."

"Tell Sam,—I know it's dreadful, but I'm sure he'll think it most interesting,—tell Sam about that horrible pigmy cannibal

who was entertaining an important chief of a neighboring tribe and who,—you know,—didn't have any food so cooked one of his wives! Go on, tell Sam that one."

But underneath this happy effusiveness, their nephew detected sadness, and before he and Paula departed, he learned the reason: Ruth was going back; she was to remain in America for three months only, and then she was going back to her work,—her "life work" she called it.

On the way home, Sam told Paula all about his affair with Ruth. He was surprised at the curiosity she displayed; she wanted to know all the circumstances connected with it, and to hear him repeat them again and again. She probed him with questions. Ruth had been really in love with him, had she? He was sure about that? . . . And at first he hadn't particularly cared about her? . . . And then after he found out she cared for *him,* he began to care for *her,*—was that it?

"Did you ask her to marry you, Sam?"

"Why, yes,—of course, I did. I was very much in earnest."

"And did you kiss her and everything?"

"Well . . . yes. Yes, I kissed her when she'd let me."

"But she wouldn't marry you?"

"No, she wouldn't marry me."

"Why, do you suppose?"

Sam shrugged. There was a meditative silence.

"Well, that's the funniest thing I ever heard of. . . . Imagine! . . . I can't get over it! . . ."

He did not ask what she thought so "funny" about it; he was wondering, as so often during the past months he had found himself wondering, what had become of Evelyn. Somewhere in the city she was in need, she was hungry, she was friendless.

"And you mean to tell me," repeated Paula in his ear, "you actually begged her to marry you?"

"Yes, I begged very hard."

"Well, that's funny. . . . That's the funniest thing I ever heard of."

§ 3

He was devoting himself with intensity to the affairs of the company.

"Just be as patient as you can with me, Paula, my dear," he

kept urging his wife. "I've got to see this thing through. You go on over to the city, stay with your father and mother, take 'Trude Behlow to tea at the Waldorf and have as good a time as you can. I have to be at the office to-night and to-morrow night and I don't know how many nights this month. You see, there's so much at stake; our bread and butter, and your father's bread and butter, depend on our success. These other outfits,—the Consolidated and the Steel Products group, are making it just as hard as they know how for us to do business. They keep cutting prices and cutting prices, and now they've got nails down to eighty-seven cents a keg! We'll go to the wall if this keeps up. They're digging their own graves as well as ours if they only knew it. Competition . . . well, you're not interested, are you?"

"I don't understand it, Sam."

"Of course. But you see I have a terrible responsibility on my shoulders, don't you? There're your father and Jerry Haines, both of 'em have put every cent they owned into this venture on my say-so. Then there's *your* money. I'm not going to be satisfied until that's all put back into government bonds and you have 'em again."

"Oh, please, Sam. Don't talk so foolish. I'm not worrying about my money."

"Maybe not,—but *I* am."

And he was worrying,—terribly.

In the desperate struggle for business that was going on all over the country, every manufacturer except those in some form of alliance, was underbidding his rivals. The situation the Atlas Nail & Wire Company now found itself facing was literally intolerable: it was possible to manufacture nails at eighty-seven cents a keg only at a loss! If these prices continued, the mill must close down. Sam could see no alleviation in sight unless some sort of an agreement between the manufacturers was reached. It was this thought that kept buzzing in his brain constantly. The Standard Oil Company and the American Sugar Refining Company had secured control of the market for their respective commodities, and recently there had been formed the General Electric Company and the United States Rubber Company. These concerns were the first of the "Trusts." The combination of smaller enterprises into one central governing organization had for its object the control of prices, and Sam believed the nail and

wire mills throughout the country could profit by this example.

Out in Chicago, there was a certain individual, in his own particular line of industry, who was ever attracting more and more nation-wide attention, and this was the president of the Consolidated Mills,—John W. Oates. Oates was a big man, Sam believed, by far the most prominent in the nail and wire business; constantly he was hearing interesting facts regarding him, and reading about him in the public press. He conceived for him a large admiration, and felt if there was any one man who could bring about a price agreement between the nail and wire manufacturers it was Oates. One day in late September without confiding his purpose to anyone, he jumped aboard a Chicago train and the next day landed at the offices of the Consolidated.

He found John W. Oates all he had imagined him: big, powerful, energetic, a gambler, loud-voiced, reckless, illiterate and loose of speech, muscularly fat, with a huge mouth and large teeth covered by a thick red voluminous mustache. Rolling his cigar about between his lips, his feet cocked upon a chair, he listened to Sam until the young man had finished speaking.

"What the hell's the name of this two-penny outfit you've got down there in New Jersey?" he demanded truculently. Sam told him.

"Well, you're too late," Oates bellowed. "The pool's already formed and we're going to put little fellows like you out of business."

Sam did not flinch. His jaw tightened a little as quietly he answered.

"Very well. We'll shut down as long as you keep prices low, but the minute you raise 'em, we'll start up again and bust you."

Oates roared his amusement. He brought his feet to the floor and his fist with a bang to the desk.

"Well, damn your impudent young soul, then come on in with us."

"That's what I want to do," Sam replied.

It was his first meeting with John W. Oates and the beginning of their friendship. Oates was a leader, an organizer; Sam found him to be ruthless in his methods, a plunger, extravagant, a bandit in certain transactions, but circumspect to the point of absurdity in others where his loyalty to his

immediate friends was involved. Sam learned to love him; his admiration for his coolness, nerve, and daring knew no bounds. The man believed absolutely in luck, and when,—as he described it,—he felt himself "right" he would risk every penny he owned on the toss of a coin.

"Fifteen years ago," he told Sam on the first day of their acquaintance, across the luncheon table, "I went down to San Antonio with the first spool of wire they'd ever seen in Texas. First thing I do is to get the mayor drunk, and he leaves me rig a corral up right in the center of town. Then I round up all the cattle men and give a demonstration with a bunch of cow-boys and half a dozen steers. Why, say, young man, I sold four thousand spools of wire to those beef raisers right then and there."

The idea of forming a pool had already been conceived by Oates and its organization was practically complete at the time Sam reached Chicago. There had been no intention to exclude the Atlas plant; the success of the undertaking depended upon every manufacturer becoming part of it. Sam's reception by its originator was characteristic of the man. Full of shouts and bullying tactics, he liked men whom he failed to intimidate. Oates' pool consisted of thirty-three nail and wire mills that pledged themselves to abide by the decisions and direction of a governing board composed of one representative from each concern. This board was to have supreme authority in fixing prices, and in assigning to the various manufacturers their share of production.

Sam spent a week in Chicago and was constantly in Oates' company. At the end of that time he returned to New York elated and confident. There was a fine taste of accomplishment in his mouth.

§ 4

It was during one of his conversations with Oates, that Louis Ritter's name happened to be mentioned. It appeared that Ritter had attended to some legal business for the Consolidated Mills at various times. Soon after he was home again, Sam looked Ritter's name up in the Directory and called upon him. He had the same insignificant personality Sam remembered, but it was evident he was now very successful. The offices of "Barnhardt, Lewis & Ritter" were impressively exten-

sive,—they occupied a whole floor in the Equitable Life Building,—and were richly furnished.

Ritter insisted upon taking Sam out to lunch with him, and the latter found it very pleasant to talk of old times and old acquaintances. His host had plenty of news for him: Vin Morrisey was working in a diamond mine in Kimberley, bossing a gang of Zulus. Matt Madison was in New York, a very successful physician,—doing first rate, Ritter understood. He proposed that Sam and himself arrange to have dinner with Matt some evening, renew the old friendship, go to the theater, and perhaps pick up some girls. Taylor Evans was lost up in the woods of Maine; he was still writing that second book of his; Ritter hadn't heard from him or of him for a couple of years. Of Jack Cheney, Sam had the latest word; he described the meeting at the Chicago Fair.

"Well," Ritter commented, "you fellows can get married if you want to, but not for mine. I want to accumulate a big thick roll of the 'long green' before I get hooked. When you have the spondulix, you can pick out any girl you fancy, but when you haven't, you take what you can get."

§ 5

When Babe Baxter closed her establishment at the end of October, Sam and Paula moved back to town. They now were occupying Paula's old bedroom once more, and it was close quarters for two. Sam had a wardrobe in the hall in which to hang his clothes and one drawer in his wife's bureau for his linen. He did not enjoy the arrangement. If the Oates pool turned out successfully and prices improved, he was determined to move into more comfortable quarters,—perhaps rent a house in Bayonne, and furnish it,—it was so pleasant over there. Paula did not seem to object to the huddled manner of living. She did not get up until long after he had departed; often she lay abed until mid-morning; then she and her mother went off on shopping expeditions together, frequently they lunched at some restaurant, and in the afternoons Paula usually met friends and either tea-ed at the Waldorf or went to their houses. Paula's absorbing interest was clothes. She was ever visiting the shops on Broadway, pricing materials, examining the new models, studying the colored plates of fashion magazines.

Usually some garment was in the process of being made at home. There was a dressmaker there frequently. Sam was accustomed to find basting threads adhering to his clothes during the day; at night he often found their room a litter of scraps of cloth, snips of canvas, pins, empty spools, buttons, and ravelings.

His wife liked to go out to dinner, and she was always begging him to accompany her. Often they went to the Detweilers' house, and there were other young couples,—the Fahrnstocks and the Bishops,—with whom they sometimes foregathered. Detweiler was one of those men who talk a great deal, who are constantly making statements and assertions that challenge belief, and in the most outrageous instances, proving themselves to be correct. Sam had not much respect for him, he was irritating and noisy, but occasionally he found him amusing. "Fluff" Detweiler, his wife, was a bouncing ball, merry, giggling, bubbling,—a happy insouciant child. Paula, for some reason her husband could not fathom, was intensely devoted to her. The two young wives saw each other every day, had long murmuring confidences together, interrupted every other minute by spasms of laughter. Neither the Fahrnstocks nor the Bishops were serious-minded. They were forever proposing "parties,"—"let's have a party," "somebody give a party," "whose turn is it for a party?" None of these people appealed to Sam; he thought them collectively a great waste of time.

§ 6

One evening in January when he came home from the mill, he found a plain envelope among his mail, waiting since the morning's delivery. He noticed it had been redirected by his aunt from his uncle's house. It read:

Dear Sir:

There is a young woman here who asks me to write you. She wants me to say to you: "Evelyn would like to see you." I am the nurse in charge of the ward.

Yours truly,
Flora McWade.

The letter was headed: "City Hospital, North Brothers' Island, Ward 11."

At an early hour the next day he started out for North Brothers' Island. It was bitter, cold, raw, windy. At once he ran into a web of city health regulations. At the dock from which the island tug departed, he was turned back; he first must obtain a permit. An official at the offices of the Department of Public Health informed him that before this could be issued, he must be vaccinated and present a form, supplied by the Department, filled out and signed by a physician. It next appeared that every doctor in the city was out during the morning; he walked at length into the offices of a cheap practitioner whose flamboyant sign over the street attracted his attention, was duly vaccinated, was duly presented with a certificate, was duly issued a permit, duly hurried to the foot of One Hundred and Thirty-fourth street only to find he must wait an hour before the health boat made her next trip. Factory whistles were blowing the noon hour up and down the river, before he saw the snow-covered shores of the island from the deck of the chugging, puffing little tug, nosing its way through a field of broken gray blocks of ice. The tug reeked of formaldehyde, an atmosphere of disease and despair clung to it, the captain, turning the spokes of the wheel in the pilot house, looked ghastly and woebegone, even the faces of the crew appeared cadaverous, stricken. A cantonment of low, long barracks, bare and snow-covered, sat bleakly on the island, and directly behind the wharf to which the tug moored, rose a grim brick building and a pole from which flew the yellow quarantine flag. The scene was wintry, desolate, forbidding. A visit to the resident physician's office—credentials examined—directions to Ward 11—a long, bitter-cold walk between lanes of hideous wooden barracks behind whose screened porches, bundled and disheveled figures silently observed his progress.

He found her at last in a long white room of white cots filled with white-faced women. A sense of disorder prevailed, figures with long streaming gray hair, clad in nondescript garments, shambled about or, wrapped in blankets, sat huddled in chairs. A silence of sickness held the long chamber, broken only now and then by sibilant whispering, and fits of hacking coughs. Eyes—eyes—eyes, staring from sunken sodden faces followed his every move, watching—watching—watching.

Evelyn's face lit up when the nurse led him to her bedside and she caught sight of him.

"Well,—Sammy-boy! This is pretty nice of you."

She was dreadfully emaciated, and spoke hardly above a whisper.

"How are you, Ev'? Why didn't you let me know you were here sooner?"

She smiled,—the old wistful wan smile of hers, only now a thousand times more appealing.

"Didn't want to bother you, I guess . . . But last week I thought I just had to have one more peek at you before . . . well, before they hand me my ticket."

He was embarrassed, not knowing what to say.

"How long you been here?"

She told him. "Guess it won't be for much longer."

"Nonsense, Ev'. Mean to say you can't get well?"

She shook her head, smiling the negative.

"Ah-h—go on. Don't believe it."

"You married, Sammy, didn't you?"

"Yep."

"Are you happy?"

"Sure; o' course."

"Tell me about her. Tell me what she's like,—where you're living and everything. That's what I want to know."

"First, tell me what's her name?" she asked as he hesitated.

"Paula; Paula Faber. She is my boss's daughter."

"Oh, yes, I remember,—old man Faber. Is she pretty, Sam?"

"Yes, she's beautiful,—very beautiful."

The pale blue eyes studied his face, her lips holding her smile.

"Did she have money, Sam?"

"Quite a bit."

"And you love her,—you're happy with her?"

"Very."

A pause.

"Tell me more about her; tell me what she's like. It won't make no diff', you know, Sammy-boy. I just lie here and wonder and that's about all I do. . . . You know, I'm not going to bother you. I shan't be here much longer, and for the little time that's left I'd like to know something about you, and how you're getting on. . . . Tell me everything, Sammy. There isn't the least bit of tiniest detail I wouldn't find inter-

esting. First of all, describe your wife to me. Go on,—*do*, Sammy-boy,—just to please old Ev'."

He did the best he could, stumbling through the details of his marriage, the sale of the hardware concern, the purchase of the Sampson property, the formation of the John W. Oates' pool, and his high hopes that the manufacturers' agreement was to spell salvation for them all.

"But tell me more about your wife?" Evelyn kept insisting. "Is she fond of cooking? Does she like housekeeping? Does she dress well? Is she tall or short? What's her favorite color?"

The thin claw-like hand was between his palms and every now and then, her fingers fluttered like dry leaves.

"Sammy, it's awfully nice you're so happy. Oh, you haven't an idea how happy I am that *you're* happy." Her eyes shone as she spoke.

"Ev'," he said huskily, "it's rotten to see you lying here. You know I'd never have let you come to this, if you'd only 've told me."

"Oh, you mustn't bother about me. I ain't got any kick coming. I'm being taken good care of. It's amazing what the city does for you. Doc Robinson,—he's in charge of the ward,—sees I get a copy of *Variety* every week."

"That time you wrote me from 'Frisco and asked me to help out,—you know I was still sore at you."

"Course, I understand. I had a nerve to try and shake you down."

"Well, I'm sorry now."

"You mustn't."

"And then after the last time I saw you, I didn't know how to find you, but I kept looking and looking—every place I went."

"You *didn't!* You was always a prince to me, Sammy-boy; you was always good to me and always wanted me to do right!" The tears came in a rush, the wet, shut eyes burying themselves in the pillow, the little hand clutching his. He covered it with his own and carried it to his lips, his sight swimming, a choking sensation in his throat.

Speechless, she shook her head, trying to withdraw her hand.

"Ev' . . . Ev' . . ."

"Don't—don't, Sammy-boy . . . I can't . . . it ain't no use. . . ."

A long silence and for nearly an hour, they remained thus, he, leaning forward, holding her hand in both of his, occasionally stroking or patting it, his eyes cast down; her own, unseeing, fixed on some half-way point across the ward, dreaming, lost in reverie. Words were superfluous between them; all that either would say the other guessed,—the unasked questions, the unspoken answers, there was no need to voice them.

At four o'clock a nurse came to take Evelyn's temperature and pulse. The afternoon light had begun to fade, already there was a gray shadow in the ward. Sam rose to his feet.

"I'll see you again soon, Ev'. I'll come over in a day or two. Is there anything you'd like to have? Books, candy, flowers?"

"I'd love some caramels, Sammy-boy. You remember the caramels?"

He'd forgotten.

"But you *mustn't* bother about me! I don't want to trouble you, Sammy,—*indeed* I don't."

"You're not going to trouble me."

He held her hand. On a sudden impulse he bent down to kiss her, and her thin white arms went round his neck, the ugly hospital robe falling back. Instantly at the moment of contact, a wave of emotion,—desire, hunger, longing,—a breath of fire swept over him. He drew her up close to him a moment, and then with stinging eyes, strode blindly from the ward.

At the office of the resident physician, he stopped, and there followed a long talk with the doctor. The man pursed his lips, fitted the tips of his fingers carefully together, and now and then nodded as he listened.

"Of course it's quite possible," he said at length when Sam paused, "but you understand, it's not probable." He picked up the card he had had brought him and studied Evelyn's "history." "She's in bad shape, an advanced stage of the disease. She'll die if she remains here,—that's a certainty. Our camps are all full. . . . Winter's a hard time on us here; plenty of fresh air and good food, that's about all we can do for them. The T.B.'s don't belong here, anyhow. This post is for contagious diseases,—smallpox, measles. We're crowded every place. . . . Your friend can't live,—well, I doubt if she lasts many weeks—"

Sam interrupted him harshly.

"Certainly," was the doctor's ready answer. "A warm dry climate unquestionably would prolong her life; she might live for years, but I doubt, if she can be cured. There's a good sanitarium down in Douglas, Arizona, we recommend,—a very good place. You could take her there and I'm sure they would—"

"I can take her no place. You'd have to *send* her."

"Well, that would mean a nurse—"

"I don't care if it would mean *twenty* nurses! You make the arrangements; I'll pay the bills."

"Very well, I'll speak to Dr. Whipple in the morning."

"Fine. . . . I'll be over again on Friday."

§ 7

Sleet had begun to fall by the time he started home, a cold, cutting, thin rain with hail and snow, that stung the neck and face. The ride was long and tiring; trolleys bumped, stopped, jangled bells, trundled onward; the El' train shrieked, racketed, jolted, careened complainingly about curves. It was close to half-past six when he stumbled up the stone stoop of his father-in-law's house. His latch-key summoned Paula. She met him, running toward him from the back of the house, her dress and scarf billowing behind her. She was dressed to go out.

"Oh, quick, Sam, get into your evening clothes; we're waiting for you. The Bishops are giving a party. Mama and Papa 've gone out and 'Genie's some place."

He drew a long breath.

"I'm tired. . . . I've got to work."

"I just knew you'd say that!"

"I'm sorry—"

"No, you're not."

"I don't feel well,"—his arm from the vaccination was hurting him,—"I don't feel like going out. Really, Paula—"

" 'Really' nothing! You've just *got* to come along. It's a *grand* party. I need a man. I'm not going to be seen to-night without an escort. I won't be conspicuous because I haven't one."

"What's on?"

"I'll tell you later. Please hurry up and get dressed. We're all going to a new restaurant,—one that's just opened,—it's the opening night,—and we've all been invited. The Bishops, the Fahrnstocks, the Dets, and ourselves."

"But Paula—"

"*Please,* Sam. Just this once; to please me; I ask you."

He looked at her. Before his eyes rose that bleak snow-covered island with its long rows of desolate white barracks.

"All right, I'll go."

"Well, now hurry. Fluff and Bill are calling for us in a cab."

As he was struggling with his white tie, he heard them downstairs.

"Oh, the cunningest little frock you ever saw in your life,—all tulle and lace . . ."

". . . can't go; Mama's got a fitting at O'Neill-Adams to-morrow at ten . . ."

". . . Why don't *you* make the candle shades? . . ."

". . . . goes this way: '"Ting-a-ling, ting-ting-ting" was all that she could say'; I don't know the rest of it."

Murmur—murmur—murmur; Fluff's squeak of laughter.

"Bet cher life I'm lucky. That little flyer netted me eight hundred dollars,"—that was Bill talking,—"yes, sir; bought Rock Island at seventy and five-eighths and sold out at seventy-two and a quarter. Fluff's going to have a new fur coat out of it. John W. Oates gave me the tip. I ran into him on the street the other day and he dragged me in and made me lunch with him. . . ."

What a lie! That was once Bill had slipped up. John W. Oates! Lunched with him! In New York! Sam happened to know he was out in Chicago. He'd challenge Bill for that statement 'fore the evening was over. . . . Oh, he wished . . . he wished . . . he wished. . . .

"Hello, Sam!" "Hurry up, Sam!" "The Bishops have been waiting an hour!"

A sloppy ride through cold and dripping streets. It was freezing and the horse kept slipping on the icy pavement. Sam's arm hurt. A blare of light illuminating the wintry night like the glare from an open furnace oven. Flowers, music, white shirt fronts, bare shoulders,—gold and mahogany —gold and mahogany,—the smell of rich food,—the mingled

odors of scent and powder and roast meat. . . . Paula was stunning! Everybody was looking at her! . . .

Here were the others.

"We thought you were never coming! What kept you?"

"You know, Sam, it's an old butler of ours that's opening this place. Don't you think it's gorgeous?"

"Oh, it's going to be a marvelous dinner; just look at the menu!"

"Champagne and everything!"

Food—food—food. So much of it sickened him. He had no appetite. His arm hurt. He drank freely. The music blatted in his ears,—there was a damn' horn that was turned right on him! . . . Paula *did* look beautiful! She was at her loveliest to-night. Her gown was a bright orange; set off with black velvet bows. She carried her head superbly.

"Say, Bill,—where did you ever know John W. Oates?"

"Oates? Why, I've known him all my life."

"Where?"

"Down in San Antonio. He was a great friend of my father's. . . . Guess you don't believe me, hey? You mean about that tip he gave me on Rock Island? . . . Well, look here."

A leaf of Waldorf note paper; it commenced "Dear Billy," and was signed "Yours, J. W. O." It was dated the previous week.

"I lunched with him a day or two after that,—let me see,—it was last Thursday,—and that's when he told me he thought Rock Island looked good."

Sam shrugged. Perhaps Bill was right, perhaps he'd faked the letter,—he would be capable of it. After all, what did it matter? His arm hurt. Bill began a detailed account of his various dealings in stocks,—"flyers in the street," he called them. Sam knew that every one would reflect creditably upon his acumen. He only half listened, letting his eyes wander dully across the smoky thick atmosphere of the restaurant. Bill's voice droned on.

"I felt all along the bears were waiting for a killing, so the next morning I telephoned in to sell me out and,—do you believe me?—before noon that very same day the old stock tumbled six and a half points! . . ."

God, what a place to be sick in! Shut away on an island,—shut away with only the sick and the dying! . . . So cold

and bleak and desolate! . . . So friendless! . . . So utterly, utterly friendless! . . .

§ 8

"For heaven's sake, Sam,—what's that you have on your arm? Did you hurt yourself or something?"

It was the vaccination bandage.

They were undressing, getting ready for bed.

"I was vaccinated to-day."

"Vaccinated!"

"Yep."

"What for?"

"I had to go to a hospital;—one of the hospitals run by the city, and they made me get vaccinated first."

"What did you have to go to a hospital for?"

"It was on North Brothers' Island. Terrible place to get to."

"But *why*, Sam? Why did you have to go?"

"A friend of mine's out there,—a fellow I used to know years ago. He has the smallpox."

"And did you see him?"

"Oh, yes. The doctor said it was quite all right."

"There's no danger of your bringing it home with you, is there?"

"No, the doctor said it was all right. I was fumigated."

"Did they bake your clothes? Make you take them off?"

"Oh, Paula,—let up, will you? I don't feel extra good to-night. My arm aches like the deuce."

She was in bed beside him.

"You *do* smell funny," she observed.

In the darkness, he could hear her sniffing. . . . Throb—throb—throb! It was the blood beating in his arm. . . . A long night before him,—a night of sleeplessness and pain.

"Sam!"

"Yes?"

"I forgot to tell you! Papa was all broken up to-night; he had some bad news. Oh, he was feeling *awfully* bad."

"What was it?"

"Now, let me see. . . . He told me to tell you as soon as I saw you, and I forgot all about it."

"Well, what's it about?"

"Don't rush me; I'm trying to remember. It was when he came in; he was talking to Mama about it. . . . Do you know anybody by the name of 'Frazee'? Does that name mean anything to you?"

"*Ephraim* Frazee?"

"Yes, that's the man. I remember now."

"What about him?"

"Well, he failed to-day,—in business, I mean. His creditors foreclosed on him, or something. At any rate, they found him dead in his office this afternoon."

"Suicide?"

"Yes, he'd shot himself. Papa told me to be sure and tell you. He felt awfully badly about it."

CHAPTER XXIII

§ 1

The pool of nail and wire manufacturers organized by John W. Oates proved an unqualified success. The central governing committee dealt summarily with the situation. In order to limit the supply, and thus increase the demand, one-third of the factories belonging to the pool were shut down, but a rental commensurate with their ordinary output and the steadily advanced schedule of prices was paid the owners of these properties. Of the mills whose activities were thus temporarily suspended, the Atlas Company at Bergen Point was one. Mr. Faber, Sam, and Jerry Haines found themselves suddenly with an income whose increasing proportions bewildered and delighted them, but with nothing to do. The price of wire nails rose from eighty-seven cents a keg in the next year and a half to two dollars and fifty-five cents a keg.

§ 2

Evelyn was successfully sent to Arizona and there placed in a sanitarium from which, after her strength began to return, she mailed Sam happy grateful letters. In the first six months, she gained eight pounds, she wrote, and was able to sit up and even take short walks. Sam was sick for ten wretched days with a swollen arm, and a high fever following his visit to North Brothers' Island. He was able to see Evelyn just once before she went south; he promised to write her, but letters had always been a bugbear to him; occasionally in answer to a communication from her he sent her a telegram, and now and then a book or a bundle of magazines. When, a year later, he was in Kansas City for a talk with the president of the Blashfield Bale Tie Company, he thought to run down to Douglas and surprise her, but an urgent message from Oates called him

back to New York City. But it made him happy to think of what he was being able to do for her.

§ 3

Many things contributed to his contentment during these, his first married years. He regarded himself as an especially fortunate young man. He was proud of the position in life he had achieved at thirty. He had a good home, a handsome, much admired wife, he was making money, and was on intimate terms with John W. Oates, a connection he had every reason to believe was going to prove more profitable. Oates was a big man, a successful speculator and promoter, on "the inside," and close to such important financial personages as J. Pierpont Morgan and John D. Rockefeller. In Paula, Sam felt he had a most satisfactory wife; she was tall, beautiful, she carried herself splendidly, she wore fine fashionable clothing, which somehow she managed to buy or make economically. Everywhere she went, she attracted attention. He liked to think she bore his name, and that people mentioned her as his wife; he felt she gave him distinction. Their home ran smoothly; it was well-ordered and, again, Paula was economical. The house, for two young people just starting out in life, was distinctly impressive. Paula gave some very elegant dinners on several occasions, and frequently she had a number of people in to tea. She knew how "to do things."

The house, of course, was not theirs. It still belonged to Paula's mother, but the young couple had had it all to themselves since Mr. and Mrs. Faber had gone to Europe and had taken Eugene with them. Sam's father-in-law had been in bad shape. About a year after the wedding, he had commenced to complain about an annoying and painful stiffness in his joints; it had grown steadily worse and had finally been diagnosed as rheumatism. A string of doctors had visited him, and for months the nauseating odor of wintergreen had permeated the house. One treatment after another had brought no relief and finally old Dr. Swan, who had been the Fabers' physician for many years, had advised his patient to consult European specialists. Sam had urged this as well, and then Eugene had begged hard for a year's violin work in Paris; he had loathed clerking in the music store. Finances were no longer

a problem; they could afford the trip and the sojourn; Sam promised to look after the mill, watch the pool, and send them monthly remittances. The Fabers had departed late in the year and the French doctors had sent the father promptly to Wiesbaden where the waters, his wife wrote, had at once improved his condition. Eugene remained in Paris, to study with one of the professors of the Conservatory. He boarded with a French family, and his occasional enthusiastic letters to his sister were full of allusions to the Opera and the Opera Comique and the fascinating people with whom he was constantly coming in contact. He made several references to a young girl named Sabine Audeaux, daughter of a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and presently wrote he was desperately in love. He had recently been introduced, he reported, to an American gentleman who claimed to know Sam well; the man's name was Adrian Lane and his wife was a brilliant and wealthy French woman, considerably older than himself, Eugene judged; they gave very distinguished musicales at their villa in Neuilly.

§ 4

During the summer that her mother was abroad, Paula had a dangerous miscarriage. She had gone to spend the hot months of July and August with the Detweilers at their home in Rockport, Massachusetts. Rockport was a little fishing village, and the Detweilers lived five miles from it on a cliff along the rocky coast. It was rank thoughtlessness that had prompted her to take an ocean plunge one burning August day. She said afterwards that it had never occurred to her that swimming came under the category of the Doctor's forbidden exertions. A wave caught her unawares and she had been thrown heavily and rolled. A time of horror ensued. No doctor was to be had, and she was nearly twelve hours without medical attendance. Four men with the utmost difficulty carried her back to the Detweiler house up the zigzagging trail that led from the beach to the cliff above. Three days later her dead child was born.

In the streets of New York, newsboys were shouting the victory of the *Defender* over Lipton's *Valkyrie* when Sam, standing in the sheltering shadow of a doorway on a gruelling

hot afternoon, read the telegram. The wire was worded he believed, to prepare him for worse tidings to follow. In after years boyish hard raucous voices bellowing in the streets never failed to recall to him the dizzying sensations of that moment.

He left for Boston the same afternoon.

Paula lingered between life and death for ten days, and was a helpless invalid for months.

§ 5

Expenses were heavy and worrisome; Sam gave them a good deal of thought during the fall of that year. Paula was brought down from Rockport,—first to Boston, then to New York,—and was finally established with a trained nurse in the front bedroom of her own home. He could not reduce the domestic staff; the cook had been for years with the family, and Paula had promised to keep both her and the maid until her parents' return. In addition to these drains upon his income, there was the fifty dollars a month he was sending Evelyn's hospital. Jerry Haines came to him one day and urged him to go with him into the pig iron commission business; Jerry assured him he had investigated conditions and the prospect looked good, particularly if a little capital was available and a credit connection with a bank arranged. But the idea did not appeal to Sam; he was more interested in high finance, and the schemes of John W. Oates and his friends, men with large vision, who understood the way big money was to be made and made quickly. When next Mr. Oates came to New York, Sam went to his office for a talk, and it was shortly afterward that he commenced to work on a salary basis for the Chicago promoter. A Trust composed of all the wire and nail manufacturers in the country had been proposed and its formation was under way; Oates had use for young Smith of the Atlas Company. The monthly compensation Sam received was not large, but it eased the situation, and the work he found absorbing.

§ 6

In January Paula was advised to undergo an operation. Her husband thought this should have been done long ago, but old

Dr. Swan was cautious. It was finally decided upon and finally performed, and to every evidence seemed successful; time only would determine the result. And it was less than a week after it, while Paula was yet in the hospital, that the cable came announcing Mrs. Faber's death. Sam kept the news from his wife as long as he was able; when at last he felt obliged to tell her, he was genuinely surprised by the intensity of her grief. There was a tragic quality about it, a tearless, grim anguish. Deeply shocked himself,—for he had been warmly attached to his mother-in-law,—he felt keenly Paula's repressed sorrow. He tried to show sympathy, but he did not know how to express himself. Fluff Detweiler spent a great deal of time with Paula, and Sam grew to resent his wife's intimacy with this empty-headed pretty doll,—an intimacy she did not accord him. In an effort to show her how sorry he felt, he bought a diamond pin and presented it to Paula, but she only listlessly thanked him.

Mrs. Faber's death had resulted from rapid pneumonia contracted while spending the holidays with Eugene in Paris; she had been ill less than five days and was buried at St. Cyr. A month following the funeral, Eugene was very quietly married to Mlle. Sabine Audeaux, after first embracing the Catholic faith. His father, a stricken, broken old man, returned to America and took up his residence with his daughter and son-in-law. A shuffling, silent figure, a shrunken specter of his old boisterousness, a little tremulous, a little apologetic, he rose every morning at five o'clock, heated himself hot water on the gas stove in the kitchen, and drank several cups of it before his frugal breakfast. During the day he pottered about the house, mooned over the paper or sat in the curtained bay-window of the parlor, gazing silently, motionlessly into the street. To occupy himself, he revived an old interest in chess, pondered over the daily problems in the *Sun* and made cautious expeditions to the Chess Club. His chief concern was for his health and he was constantly ridden by a fearful dread of the rheumatism's return; at the least sensation of stiffness in his joints, he would promptly take himself to bed and dose himself with powerful salicylates.

"Sam, my poy," he would say to his son-in-law, "dere's a leedle dampness in der air dis morning. I guess der ole man von't go out. You know, dat knee felt kind of funny yesterday afternoon." He would flex it gingerly. "Golly mike, I

hope dis plaguey rheumatism don't cum pack. I'd shoot myself c'vick if I t'ought so. Der ole man ain'd much goot any more. I don't vant to go on living und suffering. Der doctors, dey can't tell me it von't cum pack. Vat's der use? 'Genie, he's got a rich girl und he likes dat Paris life,—moosic and all dat high falootin' stuff; he's all right. Und Paula,—vell, she's got for a husband der finest man I know. . . . No-no, shut oop; I know vat I'm talkin' about. . . . So vy should I stick 'round? I t'ink der c'vicker I go meet Tillie der petter. . . ."

§ 7

One evening when Sam was leaving John W. Oates's office at a late hour, he unexpectedly encountered Taylor Evans. Overjoyed to see him, he made him promise to come to dine with him a day or so later. He wanted Taylor to see his house, his style of living, and particularly his wife. Paula, as he had hoped, was able to come to the table, but she went early to bed; her father did not appear, so Sam and his guest, over half a bottle of rye and seltzer, talked far into the night.

"Well, what do you think of my home? . . . and what do you think of my wife?" Sam asked when they were alone. "Of course, Mrs. Smith's been ill for a long time, now,—ever since last summer in fact,—and she's not looking her best, but she really *is* considered beautiful. . . ."

He was disappointed that Taylor did not express more enthusiasm. He told him about his intimacy with John W. Oates, but Taylor remained noncommittal. His old friend wanted to talk only about himself and his work.

Taylor had just completed another novel, one that had taken him three years to write; he had sweated blood over it. It was a terribly grewsome story, but absolutely true to life,—the tale of a Bowery girl, *Miranda of the Tenements,*—the best work he had ever done.

"There's no question about it being my best,—it's way in advance of *Tarnished Wings* and my short stuff." He had the same old lazy drawl which Sam had always found pleasing. "I tell you it's a great novel, a really big book; while it isn't as good as I should like, at least it's as good as I can do now; I'm satisfied. But—will you believe me?—I've had the deuce of a time finding a publisher! The man who published *Tar-*

nished Wings would have none of it. He said it was *too true to life!* Said nobody would read it! . . . Why the devil should I care whether people read it or not? It's the thing here in me," tapping his chest, "that I've wanted to express and I've done it. . . ."

Sam did not follow all that he said. He studied him. He wondered if Taylor was getting the "big head."

They talked of old acquaintances. Taylor had had a letter from Vin Morrisey only a few weeks before. Vin had been having the most extraordinary experiences. He'd happened to be in Johannesburg at the time of Jameson's raid, had enlisted in the British army for the defense of the city, and upon the collapse of the column and the suppression of the insurrection, had been jailed by the Boers, and the State Department at Washington had had its hands full keeping him from being hanged. He had been finally released and ordered out of the country. The letter Taylor had received was dated at Cape Town in January, and in it, Vin stated he was sailing on the *Norman Castle* on the twenty-fifth of the month, but made no further mention of plans.

§ 8

When the hot weather came around that year, Sam received a very cordial invitation from Narcissa urging him and Paula to come to spend the summer months with her and the children at Wood's Hole on Buzzards Bay where she and Phineas had purchased a house. "We have such fun," she wrote, "yachting, bathing, and swimming, the weather is heavenly, and we have plenty of room. We keep three servants so Paula won't have a thing to do but just loaf and have a good time." It sounded attractive; Sam accepted with delight, and he and his wife arrived the end of June. He could stay only a night or two, now and then, as Mr. Oates was calling on him more and more and keeping him almost constantly on the jump. The Trust was well launched and there was a mass of detail that required adjustment. Paula had had a second operation in April and was now rapidly regaining her strength and good looks and her husband felt he had no further cause for concern. The summer amid the salt airs of Wood's Hole, he was confident, would complete her restoration. On his second visit to his sister's house, to his disappointment, he learned that

Paula wanted to leave. She and Narcissa unfortunately were not congenial. His sister confirmed this and begged Sam not to urge his wife to remain since she was not contented. There was nothing amiss between the two women; they did not quarrel or even irritate one another. Paula was bored, that was all; she complained of an overburdening *ennui*. In mid-July she departed to join the Fahrnstocks at their summer camp in the Adirondacks; the Detweilers unfortunately were in Europe. Sam did not see his wife again until September.

§ 9

There was a change in Paula when she came back to the city. It was not particularly noticeable at first, but after a while Sam became more conscious of it. Just what was the quality of the difference in her, he could not determine. Never had she appeared to him more sumptuously lovely, and there was a new sparkling vivacity about her that transfigured her. He was enchanted with her, thought her ravishing, the old feeling of losing his breath at sight of her, returned to him with even greater force. He could not get enough of her society; he wanted to caress her all the time. Presently he began to be aware of a certain unyieldingness on her part; it was no more than that at first, but after a little, he commenced to suspect that his demonstrativeness roused in her something almost like recoil. He was offended and ceased his attentions. She seemed not to notice.

The Detweilers returned from Europe in October, bringing her a present of a gorgeous dinner dress,—a dress covered with black sequins, cut low in a deep V-shape in the back. Her enthusiasm upon seeing Fluff again, increased Sam's irritation. She had shown no such effusion towards himself.

One evening the mystery was explained. A glance at a harmless scene furnished him the clue. Coming home a little after ten o'clock, he found a young man with Paula in the parlor,—a young man, introduced as Mr. Richard Dorn, who had black waving hair, burning eyes, and who had been playing the piano for his hostess,—a youth at least three years her junior. Sam glanced at them, nodded gravely, and walked heavily upstairs. It was clear to him at last what was the matter. His only sensation was one of hurt.

Richard Dorn became a frequent visitor in the house. He

came to tea in the afternoon, occasionally stayed to dinner, when Sam was detained downtown, and spent many evenings with Paula in the parlor. Two or three times a week, he escorted her to the Detweilers' or the Fahrnstocks' homes; once he took her to the opera. Sam went about his affairs as if he saw nothing amiss; he even invented excuses to remain away in the evenings. It was against Julia Fahrnstock and Fluff Detweiler that his resentment burned. Both were in Paula's confidence; she discussed with them, he suspected, the progress of her amour with her mincing, romantic young man, and he hated them. One day he turned on her abruptly.

"Paula,—I just want to say this much: You're my wife, and as my wife I expect you to conduct yourself with dignity no matter how your feelings toward me may have changed."

He had thought the sentence out carefully beforehand, and he gave her no opportunity for reply, shutting the door between them quickly.

One night as he approached his home, the lighted parlor and the drawn curtains told him that Richard Dorn had not yet departed. It lacked only a few minutes to twelve o'clock. He paused and studied the windows from the sidewalk beneath. Quietly, slowly he mounted the front steps; quietly, slowly fitted the key into the lock; quietly, slowly closed the door behind him, and parted the curtains that screened the parlor entrance. Paula reclined upon the couch, clad in creamy lace, supported by a nest of cushions; young Dorn sat beside her upon the couch's edge, bending over her, talking earnestly; their hands were linked. Both started sharply as Sam entered; the shock and alarm on their faces sickened him. Paula's hair was slightly disarranged; she tried to adjust it with quick fingers. Sam regarded them silently, the blood roared in his ears, but he felt no excitement. Their fright made them ridiculous. He made a quick reach for Dorn's arm. There was nothing but a skinny shank of bone beneath his grasp. A cry burst from the boy's lips, and Paula voiced a warning: "Sam—be careful!" He jerked the foolish young figure toward the door; Dorn stumbled and fell, attempting to struggle. Sam dragged him across the carpet, out into the hall, opened the front door, pulled him through to the landing and flung him down the steps. Very deliberately he went back into the house, picked out Dorn's hat and coat from the hat-rack, returned to the landing, and tossed them down upon

the prostrate figure below. Then, closing the door behind him, he mounted to his room, gathered his night things together, and sought Eugene's empty bedroom down the hall, where he spent the night.

No words passed between him and his wife for several days. He could not tell how angry she was with him, and he was afraid to learn. Of Dorn he saw no more. Oates sent Sam to Indianapolis, and he was absent a week. When he returned, he was surprised to find that Paula wanted to make peace. She curled herself up into his lap, wound her beautiful white arms about his neck, nestled against him, covering his cheek and chin with quick pecking kisses, and told him he was an old bear.

§ 10

He stood on the corner of Fifth Avenue and watched a regiment of the National Guard marching down the street. They were a fine looking body of men on their way to join Shafter's forces at Tampa. The country was ringing to the strains of martial music and everyone was talking about Cervera's fleet, and whether or not Admiral Sampson would be able to prevent its escape.

As the end of the column passed, and the watching crowd began to break up, Sam turned away, wishing he too might go. He was only thirty-three and strong as an ox. Perhaps there'd be a call for older men later on. Colonel Roosevelt, he understood, was accepting them. What was this war going to mean to the United States? Business had been booming; McKinley was making a good President. Would this war bring about another panic? Not likely. No doubt it would delay Mr. Oates' schemes for a time. . . . There was a man blocking his path. Sam shoved sharply; the other looked; their eyes met; it was Vin Morrisey.

"Well, by the Lord God,—it's Sam!"

They exchanged greetings.

"You're twenty pounds heavier."

"So are you, but you carry it well, Sam."

"I was just wishing I could go along with the boys."

"Well, say *I'm* going. That is. . . . Let's find some place we can sit down and talk. I've a lot to tell you."

They turned into a saloon near by where pipes and pewter

steins hung from the rafters, and sat down at a table in a corner.

"I wonder if you can help me, Sam," Vin began. "There's a magazine that's willing to give me credentials and send me down to join the rest of the correspondents. I've contracted to give them six articles, and they've agreed to take them, or at least buy them. In other words, I'm sure of my money. But I need an outfit: clothes, field-glasses, bedding roll, everything in fact, and I haven't a nickel. Will you stake me? I could get a job and earn the money, of course, but things may start happening down there and I want to get to the front as quickly as possible. I'll pay you back, Sam, as soon as I can."

"How much do you think you'll need?"

"Couple of hundred. Guess it will take all that."

Sam rubbed his jaw. He wanted to help Vin; he was thinking of ways and means.

"Let's go down and talk to Mr. Breckinridge of the Fourth National. He may be able to help us out. Perhaps he'll accept my note."

Sam saw Vin once more before he left.

"You don't know how much you've done for me, Sam," his friend said, wringing his hand. "It's going to give me a chance to see some real living,—men with the veneer of our damn' civilization rubbed off. I hate war,—it's the pastime of fools,—but I like to study my fellow beings in the raw. Some day I want to write about them. You'll hear from me as soon as I get down there, and you'll get half my first magazine check."

"If you run across Taylor Evans," he called back through the station's iron grating as he made his way toward his train, "tell him I'll look for him in Cuba."

§ 11

For nearly two years, John W. Oates had been trying to form a Steel and Wire Trust. It was a gigantic undertaking, capitalized at $90,000,000, and it planned to include every nail and wire mill in the country. Associated with him in the colossal scheme were a number of "brainy" men: John Blake of the Illinois Wire Company, Francis Jennings of the Bonanza Steel, and Albert Blashfield of the Blashfield Bale Tie Com-

pany of Kansas City. All these had big interests at stake, and while they were working in harmony with Oates, each was looking out first and foremost for himself. To organize the Trust, options to purchase outright at least four-fifths of the factories and mills engaged in the making of nails and wire had first to be secured. Next, the purchase of each property had to be negotiated separately, and the terms of sale differed widely. In return for their factories the owners agreed to accept in payment part cash and the balance in stock,—so much common, so much preferred,—in the new organization. Secrecy in these negotiations was of prime importance. It was a long, ticklish business, requiring determination, diplomacy, shrewdness, and quickness of judgment.

Sam was no more than one of the lesser subordinates who hurried in and out of Oates' offices in Chicago and New York, but he knew the great man liked him. Oates was ever laying his heavy mammoth paw on Sam's shoulder, calling him "son," and regaling him with foul but amusing stories. His language was horrible—profane and obscene,—but in spite of it, he was likable; an affectionate warmth radiated from him that offset the coarser attributes. John Blake, president of the Illinois Wire Company, used sometimes to joke Sam about being Oates' messenger boy, but Sam was secretly proud of the phrase. In reality, he was hardly more than that, but he loved the job and his chief's confidence. It gave him a tremendous feeling of importance to possess knowledge which he knew was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to others. He was sent hither and thither, on this mission or that, to explain some obscure point to a hesitating manufacturer in Pennsylvania or Ohio, to ask for a certain report or deliver a confidential message, too vital to be entrusted to paper. One trip took him as far west as California and Puget Sound. He came to know nearly all the presidents and officers of the companies entering the Trust. It was his first contact with "big business," and he plunged into it with an eagerness which could not but delight the man he served. The very argot of finance was music to Sam; he loved tripping figures in millions of dollars off his tongue, he loved rattling off percentages, rates of interests, this or that year's earnings; he loved to talk of common and preferred stocks, to explain the much discussed cumulative feature of the latter, to speak glibly of capitalization, holding companies, underwriters, monopolies, investments,

flotation. It was the breath of life to him, and he breathed it deeply.

Of the terms he secured for his own and his partners' little plant at Bergen Point he had no reason to feel ashamed. In a position to know what had been the basis of settlement upon which other plants had been purchased, he drove a hard bargain. The Trust agreed to take over the Atlas Company for five thousand dollars in cash, two hundred shares of preferred stock and five hundred shares of common. The first month, these were listed on the Exchange, American Wire preferred sold at 80, common at 40¼.

CHAPTER XXIV

§ 1

THE next three years were exciting, unsettled. In them Sam turned gambler, and there was no caprice of Lady Luck which he did not have the opportunity to observe. Little by little he was drawn into the habit of speculating. Ever since his marriage he had been feeling his hand in Wall Street dabblings. Fat little Lyman Baxter had first persuaded him to take a fling. One day Baxter had come back to the house at Bayonne, full of excitement, and had gone about whispering in the ears of a few favorites among his wife's boarders. Chicago Gas was in for a boom; he had had a tip straight from "headquarters"; it was going upon the jump with to-morrow's session. Sam with hesitation gave him fifty dollars and a few days later, Baxter handed him a check for a *hundred* and fifty. Then Bill Detweiler always seemed to be winning something "down in the Street." Sam did not believe half the tales of success he boasted about, but of certain ones he saw sufficient evidence to prove them true. John Blake, Francis Jennings, Albert Blashfield, all the coterie of men who followed in John W. Oates' wake, were speculators. They gambled in thousands and won thousands; Oates led the way and made millions. Tips on new stocks were flying about everywhere; friends of influential friends who were next to the "big bugs" were "let in on good things"; whispers that Jones was bulling Sugar, that Brown was cornering Lead, that there was "a deal on" in Union Pacific went from lip to lip. All about Sam, while he was associated with Oates, were men who did nothing else but speculate; some of their operations he was able to follow closely; there was no doubt about their winnings; he saw the results, saw them make thousands over night. Across the country like a prairie fire swept a fever of speculation; great enterprises were combining daily, every sort of industry was being organized into a Trust; with competition eliminated,

prices were bound to rise. Sam followed a tip here, a tip there, risked a few hundred dollars, was satisfied with moderate profits, saw with increasing satisfaction his modest bank balance swell into sizable proportions. In the two years he had worked for Oates, the period during which he kept accurate check on his winnings and losings, he accumulated a little over ten thousand dollars. His pride in possessing so much money was intense; to him it represented the stamp of success, the mark of ability.

It was through Lyman Baxter that he became acquainted with the firm of Kenyon & Lee, members of the Stock Exchange. Tom Kenyon was a spectacled, squint-eyed young man, for whose judgment Sam grew to have great respect. Kenyon never speculated himself, was uniformly conservative, often had the most unaccountable intuitions about what a stock was going to do, and for blunt, square-shouldered Sam Smith "of the Oates' crowd" possessed a warm, personal regard. After the American Steel and Wire Company was an accomplished fact, Sam had nothing definite to occupy him. He fell into the habit of dropping in at Kenyon & Lee's every morning just before ten o'clock, and establishing himself in one of the leather-seated "customers' chairs," to watch the quotation board, and idly roll his cigarettes. Everybody who frequented the offices, he came to know,—both employees and other speculators like himself.

"How d'y, Leonard,—Hello, Dan,—'Morning, Rainey,—How's Mr. Hanley this morning? Whiskey look good to you? —What d'you think of Minnesota Iron? Personally I rather like National Lead. . . ."

Idling there, watching the stocks go up and down, occasionally taking out a little red leather note-book he carried in an upper vest pocket, to make a note or refer to one, Sam would while away the morning, then saunter out to Delmonico's or The Savarin for a bite at noon, nodding to acquaintances whose days, he knew, were filled like his own. Once or twice during his lunch he would interrupt it to have a look at the ticker tape, and when he had finished, he would return to his chair, his cigarettes, and Kenyon & Lee's quotation board. Usually he had a thousand or two up in margin, but he never risked more than that, and monthly he averaged profits which often equaled that amount, sometimes exceeded it.

Immediately following the launching of the American Steel

and Wire Company and the Federal Steel Company, a hundred other trusts leaped into being. National Tube, National Steel, American Tin Plate, and American Steel Hoop were some of them. But it was in Oates' organization that Sam's interest rested; he felt he knew the man, knew what he was going to do with the gigantic industry of whose Board of Directors, he was chairman; the Trust was Oates' child, his creation, he was certain to administer its ninety million dollars' interest with shrewdness and sagacity. Sam's eye was ever on the slow upward trend of its stock,—up—up—steadily up, climbing by eights and quarters, dropping off one week, more than recovering the next. Enthusiasts declared American Steel and Wire was certain to go par, and Sam could see nothing that would prevent it. It came to him one day that the opportunity for becoming rich lay within his grasp; it was confronting him, he needed only the courage to plunge, load up on American Steel and Wire, wait for its rise, and realize everything his heart desired. Ten thousand dollars put up in margin, and if the stock rose ten,—fifteen points . . .!

And the very day after the one in which he had handed Tom Kenyon his check and found himself long a thousand shares of American Steel and Wire, Oates "sold him out" and "sold out" thousands of others like Sam who were backing the Chicago promoter and his enterprises. At least, so said "the Street." Oates, it was reported, made a cool million by going short of the stock he had boomed. The bottom fell out of the market and American Steel and Wire, common, broke six points and went on sliding downwards.

The inside of the deal, Sam never knew. What he did know was that Oates, upon a visit to New York, had allowed himself to be interviewed by a reporter of one of the big metropolitan dailies, and in the interview had declared it to be his opinion that the steel industry in general was in a bad way, that there was an excess of production, one-third of the mills of his company were to be shut down, and that prices were in for a slump. The announcement came as a thunderbolt and at once the stock of the American Steel and Wire Company broke sharply, bringing with it a sympathetic decline in other industrial lines. A roar of denunciation and protest immediately arose in the press and in financial circles. Oates was accused of having boomed his company's stock, of having advertised it as successful, of having paid dividends not only on its preferred but

on its common stock, in every way encouraging the public to buy, and then of having sold short, of loosing a howl of calamity in order to depress the stock, thus putting himself in a position to reap an enormous profit. Oates declared this accusation to be absolutely unfounded, and claimed only to have said in the interview no more than what were actual facts; he had made nothing by the break, but stood to lose his entire fortune.

Sam did not trouble to investigate the truth of these accusations. He believed them,—believed them with a sickening conviction that they were true. Oates was too shrewd a man, too clever a manipulator not to appreciate fully what such an announcement as his in the press would do to the stock he fathered. No doubt, Blake, Jennings, Blashfield, and "the boys" had all been in with him on the deal and each had made his neat pile of a hundred thousand or so. To Sam, it was the scurrilous trick of an unprincipled scoundrel,—a rascal no better than a thief. He had believed in Oates, had pinned his faith to him, would have staked his life on the man's utter incapacity for treachery. It was a hard blow for him; it took from him just that much more of his faith in his fellow beings.

§ 2

The slump Oates had started brought about immediately a mad scramble to sell and get out of the falling market. Rumors ran like wildfire through the Street: there had been too much of this combination business, too many Trusts, the underwriters were choked with stock which now they had to unload. The phrase "undigested securities" was on everybody's tongue; "get out—get out" was the universal advice; "the bottom's fallen out of the market; there's another panic coming." Sam did not believe it. He still had faith in John W. Oates,—not as a friend to be trusted and followed, not as a man of honor and loyalty,—but as one who knew, every step of the way, what he was about, as one who with his pack of jackals at his heels, would see to it that he and they made money, and more and more money, always financially the gainers no matter what the transaction. Tom Kenyon alone of those around him, agreed with him; Sam's ten thousand was gone; he had instructed Kenyon to sell him out at 37, but in the swift drop of

the market, it had not been possible to obtain more than an average of 35. He took his loss grimly, and studied the situation. The stock would go on dropping, it was hard to tell how far Oates would let it go, but somewhere it would stop and once that point was reached it would immediately go up again. Sam knew this with absolute confidence. Oates would force it down to its lowest possible point, and then suddenly turn bull and make a second "killing." He had but to watch for that moment, and catch the stock on its rebound.

He had now not a penny of his own in the world, but there was the stock,—the common and preferred stock the American Steel and Wire Company had paid to the Atlas Company. This stock was not held on margin; it was owned outright, and Sam had possession of it. Boardman Sampson had been paid off in cash, so had Jerry Haines; Sam, on behalf of his father-in-law and his wife, had taken the stock rather than the money. He never stopped to ask himself, now, who actually owned this; he never stopped to think it represented the money Mr. Faber had raised by mortgaging his house and his life insurance, and that it represented the bonds Paula had handed over to him. He put up the stock as margin and once again found himself "long" of American Steel and Wire. He had calculated that Oates would let the stock go off twenty points and then cover. When it touched twenty-seven, he had decided he would buy, but when that figure was reached, he waited a little longer. Down it slid: 26,—25. 25 was the turning point, he believed, and he bought to his last penny. But the change he expected did not take place; instead, the downward trend steadily continued. Down—down—down! 24,—21,—18½,—16. Another point drop and he realized he stood a ruined man,—ruined and disgraced. It was then that the question of his right to gamble with funds entrusted to him came to him, and pursued him like a horrible specter with a pointing finger. How face Paula, how confess his faithlessness to his broken old father-in-law who thought so well of him! And there was Evelyn, who had been writing him such happy, confident letters, who seemed month by month to be gaining health and strength, whose life,—certainly the prolongation of it,—depended upon his paying her sanitarium bills! What would become of her, if he failed. What would become of them all? . . . Paula? He could not imagine how she would accept the news. He deserved all her bitterness.

But his wife's attitude toward him and her opinion did not so much matter; their fortunes were linked together. He would begin over again; he and she would start life anew, and, perhaps, a little more sanely and solidly. She might reproach him now for a bad error in judgment, even for misappropriation of funds, and she might upbraid him with justice, but Paula had faith in him; she would never desert him. . . . But the old man! Ah, that was the tribunal before which he shrank to appear! The disillusionment of that shuffling old rheumatic! To destroy that blind faith, that trust, that love! . . . Ah, it was not endurable! Men killed themselves sometimes rather than face disgrace. Suicide? No, that was the escape of the weak, and he was strong,—not morally!—God, he must admit that now!

Dark days and dark hours! The cup of ignominy and failure was held pressed hard against his lips; he tasted it and learned well its flavor. Narcissa, Evelyn, Paula,—the old man! Over and over in his mind, he turned their names and thoughts of them. Pace the floor—pace the floor—pace the street,—twist and turn, weighing every loophole of escape, every straw at which to catch to save him from ruin. . . . Jerry Haines? Jerry might lend him a few hundred, but hundreds were of small account. Narcissa? His sister might have a thousand or two laid away in a bank, or she might persuade Phineas to lend her the sum. But could he go to her and tell her the real purpose for which he needed the money? For speculation? And if he could not bring himself to do this, should he deceive her?

"Oh, Mr. Smith." It was Tom Kenyon beckoning him into his private office. "What shall I do? She's touched 15 and a half. Another half point and I'll be obliged to sell you out. You couldn't protect yourself with a few thousand more? Perhaps hundreds will do the trick. She'll come back, just as sure as I'm alive,—and I'd like to see you aboard, sir,—you deserve to pull out, if you'll permit me to say so."

Hundreds—hundreds—hundreds! He hurried off to see Breckinridge. There was just a chance the banker would accept his note for five hundred for thirty days. If not Breckinridge, then perhaps Jerry. Oh, God, why not pull them *all* down in his ruin? What mattered it since so many were involved?

Fifteen and a half—fifteen and a half—fifteen and a half.

It was like a trip hammer rapping its song inside his brain. He lunged into the Hoffman House and jostled a man from before the ticker. Fifteen and a half—fifteen and a half—fifteen and a half! . . . Fifteen and five-eighths—fifteen and *three quarters*—SIXTEEN! She had turned. He was saved! He went blindly staggering out into the street. "Oh, God—oh, God, I thank Thee—I thank Thee!" It was a little boy's prayer of gratitude that sprang to his lips. He had to lean against the side of the building and cover his face with both his hands.

§ 3

It was a terrible lesson to him. A prominent business man whom he once met when traveling about the country had said very impressively to him in giving him advice: "Never bet on another man's trick," and Sam recalled this now, and wrote it on his heart. "Never bet on another man's trick!" The whole murderous game of speculation was "betting on some other man's trick." The gullible public who took chances in "the Street" were exactly what they were derisively called, —"Lambs." He swore he would not be one of them. He was too proud, had too much self-respect to put himself in a position where he could be duped. When he, himself, could hold the cards, and he, himself, "do the trick,"—ah, then it would be different! That should be his revenge,—that should be the way he would get even. Oates had only engineered a clever deal; Sam would bide his time until he was in a position to put across a scheme equally clever. . . . The whole world was based on the theory of the big fellow eating the little fellow. That was evolution,—the reason for the supremacy of man over other forms of life. . . . Well, he was going to be one of the "big fellows."

§ 4

Bill Detweiler had a younger brother, Gordon, an artist, who lived in three rooms on the south side of Washington Square. He and Paula were "carrying on." The phrase, as used by the group of Paula's intimates, properly described the affair. Sam knew of it from its beginning, watched its

progress coldly, and said nothing. While she might conceive a fancy for some other man, Paula, her husband believed, was incapable of an indiscretion. She would amuse herself with her young admirer for a month or two, have her harp put in shape and in tune, practise her scales and her old "pieces," subjugate him with her flights of liquid notes and her effective plunking, grow suddenly weary of him, send him to the right-about, to become once more an affectionate and solicitous wife. But of such conduct he could not and did not approve. There was a lack of dignity about it; it was belittling, it humiliated him. He often felt that Paula looked upon him contemptuously, particularly when her artistic sense was aroused. Music, books, pictures meant little to him in themselves; as standing for what was uplifting to the mass of humanity in general, and as representing man's intellectual growth, he approved of all the arts thoroughly. The trouble was, he often used to think with irritation when cultured people were around him, he had so little time for these things. Somebody had to make money, pay bills, keep the pot boiling, and that was his job. Paula and the rest of what her father called her "high falootin' " friends could talk volubly of books, pictures, or music. He had no time for them. His wife never seemed to be bothered by his lack of appreciation until she happened to take a fancy to some good-looking and artistically inclined young man. Then, at once, she would begin to treat him patronizingly, to assume an air of apology for him. It used to make him furious. He knew himself to be deficient in such knowledge, but he believed, too, that Paula and many of her artist friends bluffed themselves a great deal, talking about things of which they knew very little.

For many years,—Paula declared it had been ever since she could remember,—there had hung on the walls of the Faber parlor a very dark painting of a woodland scene in an ornate gold frame. Sam had never given it a thought; nobody in the house had ever done so since its mistress had left it. But now Gordon Detweiler discovered it, raved about it, made Paula have it reframed because he said the old one was "an abomination." Sam found amusement in listening to the young man rhapsodizing about it, and in watching him twist his head to one side before it, squinting at it with half-closed eyes, making gestures with his thumb, and talking of "feeling," "color," "rhythm." Detweiler claimed it was by a great French artist,

and was apparently shocked when Sam wanted to know what he thought it to be worth.

After it was completed, and hung over the piano, Sam discovered that Gordon had painted Paula's portrait, and that she had been going down regularly to his studio in the mornings to pose for him. When he asked her whether or not any one else had been present during these sittings, she had answered him haughtily: "Of course not!" and he had been afraid to inquire further.

Afraid? In the first weeks of his marriage, he had realized he *was* afraid of her, and in certain moods and on certain occasions, very much so. She could be sharp-tongued when she was angry, and nothing roused her more quickly than the slightest imputation of impropriety on her part. Virtue was the stamp of a good woman to Paula, and she thought of herself as a very good woman, most particularly a virtuous one. At the same time, she was not above enjoying a heart-burning flirtation with a romantic and artistic youth. Men who interested her were always romantic and artistic. They either sang or played or painted. She never troubled herself about their own feelings, being outspokenly cynical in regard to broken hearts. But Sam hated these affairs, innocuous though they might be; it was beneath his wife's dignity to encourage this sort of puppy love-making, to give the impression to these foolish and misguided young men that she was hoodwinking her husband, that he failed to make her happy. Her faithfulness he never questioned. He knew Paula thought of him as her husband in every sense of the word; he was the "head of her house," her "liege lord" in the old-fashioned sense. He was certain she would sooner commit suicide than surrender herself to another man.

§ 5

It was with much pride that he found both his friends, Vin Morrisey and Taylor Evans, represented in the same issue of one of the leading popular magazines shortly after the end of the Spanish War. He thought Taylor Evans' short story excellent, and Paula was enthusiastic over Vin Morrisey's description of the battle of El Caney. Wrapped in a clumsy package of old brown paper, tied with a hairy strand of rope, Vin sent Sam a torn bit of red bunting, a piece of the Spanish

flag lowered at Santiago. He was enormously proud of it, had it carefully protected between two sheets of glass, framed it, and hung it in the parlor. In a letter containing a money order for the balance of the sum Sam had advanced, Vin wrote that he was off on another "bumming" expedition, this time in company with the Italian painter, Francis Ruggieri; they were sailing for the South Seas and Vin was going to learn to paint.

Sam shook his head as he folded the letter. Vin was brilliant,—phenomenally so,—he could do anything he fancied, but he could not concentrate on any one definite activity. He was an actor, photographer, poet, writer, had been a Zulu boss in Kimberley; these things he could do and do well, but he could not stick to any one of them; he was dissipating his talents and would never amount to anything. Taylor Evans, on the contrary, was showing he had common sense. *Miranda of the Tenements* had not sold nearly as well as *Tarnished Wings,* in fact it had gone very flat; Taylor claimed the war killed it. But he was going right ahead with his work and had contracted to do a war novel for a certain magazine where it was to appear in serial form. Sam was tremendously impressed when Taylor told him he was to receive three thousand dollars for the serial rights. He was delighted, too, to find that Paula liked Taylor. His old friend often came to the house and he enjoyed long talks with Paula about books, while Sam sat near by rolling and smoking his cigarettes, glancing over the financial columns of the evening paper. He liked to hear the murmur of their voices.

Taylor, upon his return from the war, brought tidings of Jack Cheney; he had happened to meet him in Cuba, "Captain Cheney of the U. S. Medical Corps." He had done some very admirable work and had distinguished himself, Taylor heard, in connection with feeding and taking care of Cuban refugees. Jack reported he had two children and an excellent practice in Canton, Ohio, asserting he was one of the happiest men in the world.

To this Sam smiled sardonically and murmured:

"Buried."

§ 6

He had a letter from Evelyn. After spending three years in Douglas, she wrote the doctors had told her, while she

would never have much strength, the progress of her disease was practically arrested. She could never live in the East nor in a locality where it was cold or damp, but she wanted Sam's advice as to whether or not she should move to a place called La Crescenta, near Los Angeles in California. A friend of hers, Elsie Harris, who had been her roommate at the sanitarium for nearly a year, had gone there and taken a small bungalow for herself and her two little girls; they had chickens, raised flowers, and loved the life. It was some time since Elsie Harris had gone to California and she had suffered nothing by the change. Now she was urging Evelyn to come out and join her; Elsie's income was microscopic, hardly enough for herself and the children, but augmented by what Evelyn was paying at the sanitarium, it would be ample for all four. What did Sam think? Evelyn was anxious to do only what he considered wise. It was clear to him she was eager to go, —and what mattered it, he thought, where she lived so long as she was happy. He wired his approval and sent her a check for an extra amount. He was glad to do it. Whenever he thought of Evelyn, he experienced a fine feeling of satisfaction; it delighted him to think that new interests were creeping back into her life.

§ 7

Paula was frantic to go to Europe. The Detweilers were going and they planned to sail early in June and return in September. She would hear all the music and visit all the galleries, get some pretty French clothes, and she would see Eugene! . . . Please, Sam. Wouldn't he let her go? She'd be away only four months.

In the upward swing of the American Steel and Wire Company's stock, Sam had won back all the money he had borrowed from his wife and father-in-law, in addition to his original stake. When his jottings showed him he could quit the market without the loss of a penny, he instructed Tom Kenyon to sell him out. Kenyon urged him to hold on. The formation of the billion dollar United States Steel Corporation was in the air and rumors of a boom were rife. Sam believed American Steel and Wire stock would continue to rise; every circumstance indicated that it would reach double the price

at which he had bought it; if he held on, it was probable he would make close to a hundred thousand dollars. But the memory of those days when ruin and disgrace had stared him in the face was too recent; he had sworn in the moment of his delivery, he would quit speculating forever once he could pull out without loss, and now he made himself adhere to this determination. In the face of Kenyon's urgings and the strong indications of an approaching sensational bull market, he ordered his broker to sell him out. He would not let himself weaken; he would not yield to temptation; life was all ahead of him; he wanted to be strong as iron.

With regard to letting Paula go to Europe with her friends, he found himself, at the moment, in a position where he could afford it. It was not the money that made him hesitate. He did not approve of the Detweilers as his wife's companions, he did not approve of the probable effect of the trip on Paula, he did not approve of Paula, herself. Paula was too frivolous; she did not take life seriously enough. They had been married for seven years and she was still running about and acting just as she had done as a bride. Nothing constructive occupied her; she was not building for the future; she was standing still and letting the world spin past her. She had neither duties nor concerns. Old Hulda did the marketing, the second girl made the beds and cleaned the house; Paula had practically nothing to do. Hulda even climbed the back stairs with Mr. Faber's trays when the old man nursed his rheumatism and remained in bed. His daughter spent her days in making clothes with a seamstress in the house, in gadding about to luncheons, teas, and entertainments with Fluff Detweiler, Julia Fahrnstock, and Fanny Bishop. She had nothing real or helpful to occupy her, and Sam had a theory that idle women sooner or later got into trouble.

His wife, he believed, ought to have a child. The mental picture of her own mother was ever before him, sweet, devoted, interested, an ideal woman building about her an ideal home for her family. He wanted Paula to follow in her footsteps. The fearful circumstances of that early miscarriage and the long illness that ensued made the possibility of motherhood for a time out of the question. Doctor Swan, whom Sam considered a whiskered old jumping-jack who waggled his arms and legs and nodded his head whenever Paula wanted him to, had agreed with her and advised against maternity. Sam

thought it all nonsense. He was convinced not only that Paula could have a healthy child without danger to herself, but that becoming a mother would give her that steadying influence which her life needed. Besides these considerations, the idea of having a boy appealed to him; he would derive a great deal of pride from parenthood; the thought of a son was tremendous. Narcissa had a fine sturdy lad, twelve years old, who could trim a "saunders" boat on Buzzards Bay with the hand of an expert. This was young Sam Holliday, his nephew and namesake, freckled, blue-eyed, tawny-headed,—a "regular" boy. His uncle had watched him one Sunday during the summer when the two were skimming over to Martha's Vineyard at an early hour in quest of bluefish. He was a youngster whom any man would be proud to point to as a son. His sister, Mary, was a large, rather unwieldy fifteen-year-old with gold bands across her teeth, and metal-rimmed spectacles. But she was sweet and affectionate, and it was pleasant to hear her voice and heavy feet up and down stairs, in and out of doors. Sam wanted children of his own.

"Paula . . ."

"Yes, Sam."

"About this trip to Paris, if I let you go——"

"Oh, *Sam!* Really? Will you? Will you really let me go? You *are* a darling."

"I haven't said so yet; I don't know if I can afford it."

"But you will,—you can and will."

She came to him and curled herself up in his lap, nestling against him, pecking with her lips his neck and cheek.

"Oo—oo—oo—you're wonderful, Sammy; oo—oo—oo, you're *too* good! . . . Oo—oo—oo—you're be-uuu-ti—ful."

"Quit that, and listen to me; there's a string to it."

Instantly she lay still, her face buried against his shoulder.

"When you come back in September will you do something for me?"

"What?"

"*You* know."

"You mean a baby?"

"Un-huh."

A pause, while he waited.

"Doctor Swan thinks . . ."

"Damn Dr. Swan! You know perfectly well you're entirely over that old trouble. You run around all the time and you're

up till all hours of the night, and you eat anything and drink anything you want. . . . You're perfectly able to go through with it. . . . And I want a kid, Paula."

"But, oh Sam! . . . Nine months?"

"Well, good Heavens, Paula, aren't you ever going to have a child? Are we going to be childless old people?"

No answer.

"Now, look here, Paula,—listen to me: I'll send you over to Paris, and I'll give you a generous letter of credit so that you can go with Bill and Fluff and do everything you want, and see everything you want, and buy everything you want. But in September when you come back, you'll cut out all that kind of foolishness and have a baby. How about it? Will you promise?"

Minutes passed and then, finally, there was a little nod of the head upon his shoulder.

"Ah, you darling!"

Sam caught her roughly, pulled her to him, kissing her vigorously.

CHAPTER XXV

§ 1

The summer that his wife was in Europe, Sam took careful stock of himself. He was thirty-six years old, in the prime of life, married to an exceptionally beautiful woman, possessed a comfortable, satisfactory home, but with neither children nor business. He was healthy, robust, made an agreeable impression on people,—particularly on men,—he wore good clothes, and appeared prosperous, but his steadily increasing girth worried him a great deal. He joined the New York Athletic Club and conscientiously exercised one hour every evening. Life, physically, he found very comfortable; he and his father-in-law were unusually congenial, Hulda cooked for them, and her puddings and pastries were responsible for the extra weight that troubled him. Mr. Faber expanded with his daughter away; he grew almost loquacious and never tired of talking business,—stock market reports, the tariff, commercial trends, investments, debating with his son-in-law various commercial enterprises he contemplated going into.

Sam was "looking 'round," as he expressed it. He wanted to find a business with a future. It must have a good "selling end" for it was there he knew he excelled, and he wanted to be his own boss. He had thirty thousand dollars to invest. The more he investigated, the more his attention returned to what Jerry Haines had offered him. Jerry occupied half of a gloomy office on Beaver Street, in which he was carrying on a fairly successful brokerage business in pig iron; he had one good connection with a blast furnace in the Schuylkill Valley, was their accredited representative in New York City, and was making from three to four thousand a year. He showed Sam how, if he joined forces with him, and supplied some working capital, together they could make six to eight thousand. Decent offices, a clerk, a bookkeeper, a bank connection, an air of responsibility, and backing were what was needed. Sam was

not particularly attracted by the nature of the enterprise; he would have preferred a factory. On the other hand, he had confidence in Jerry, liked him thoroughly, and his proposition looked good. He decided to go in with him. Mr. Breckinridge of the Fourth National approved and promised a line of credit. August was spent in selecting quarters, equipment, a bookkeeper, and office boy, and in getting acquainted with the trade. In the midst of these preliminaries, Sam suddenly realized he was happy,—happier than he had been in a long time,—since the Bergen Point days. He and Jerry were full of enthusiasm and the more he familiarized himself with the new undertaking, the more he became convinced there was money in it. He commenced to study the sources, supply, manufacture, and markets for pig iron; he had learned a great deal about wire and nails and he knew something about steel; he now concentrated on iron.

§ 2

Old Cyrus Smith had a sunstroke during the fearful heat of that summer. Sam cabled Ruth and she came home. He was full of his own affairs at this time, but he was obliged to take a hand in straightening out those of his uncle. The aged man no longer could work, he was thin to the point of emaciation, and very feeble. Aunt Sarah too had grown old, and it was obvious that even the light duties of housekeeping were too much for her. Some new arrangement had to be made; the old couple needed someone to look after them; it was clear that Ruth's place was by their side. Sam only half guessed the disappointment it was for the young woman to abandon her work.

"We were to establish a station in the Lomie district this year," was her only comment, but he noticed her lip tremble.

"I'm sorry, Ruth," he said, soberly.

"Oh, that's all right. . . . What do you think we'd better do?"

It was decided to sell the Sixteenth Street house and to close the hay and grain yard. Uncle Cyrus had saved money and had invested it in bank stock. Sam was surprised to learn that his uncle had been a director of the Madison Avenue Savings Bank for over fifteen years. The income he and his

wife could command was more than ample for their needs. Ruth found them a quiet, comfortable hotel in Tarrytown, where for a time they would be happy and well taken care of; when the negotiations for the sale of the old home were completed, it was proposed that they buy a house in the country which Ruth should manage and where she would look after them. Meggs had died the year before, but Marty was still able to cook, and she was to go to them when they were ready for her. What furniture it was thought might be of use was sent to storage, the rest to an auctioneer. Aunt Sarah wished to know what Sam desired done with what belonged to him. He was puzzled; he did not remember owning anything, but his aunt insisted.

"Oh, yes, Samuel, there are some trunks and a few pieces. I remember distinctly; they were brought here while you were in the hospital."

He found she was right. In the cellar he discovered the bed, the bureau, the Morris chair that he and Evelyn had bought together. There were a couple of boxes and a rusty trunk,—his and her old clothing presumably.

"You might just as well let the auctioneer have them, too, Samuel, and get rid of them," his aunt advised.

"No," he said, "I'll send for them; we have a large cellar at our house."

The idea of an auctioneer bidding these things off to a junk dealer did not appeal to him, somehow. Evelyn would like them and probably have good use for them. He would have them cleaned, crated, and shipped to her, and he smiled as he thought of her pleasure when they arrived.

"They'll give her quite a jolt," he mused.

§ 3

Paula came home early in September, radiant, beautiful, apparently glad to be back. It was the day of McKinley's assassination at Buffalo. Coming off the dock with a porter trundling her trunks on a truck behind them, they heard the news. Sam's thoughts at once flew to the Street. There'd be a terrible slump, a grand scramble to cover! For the hundredth time, he was glad he was out of the game. National calamities did not affect the pig iron business.

He was skeptical about the lastingness of his wife's mood, her gay spirits, and her exuberance. He did not quite know what to make of the hand squeezes and little kisses she bestowed upon him in the cab. She was a clever actress, he knew, and he did not propose to be fooled. He intended her to live strictly up to her agreement with him. But as the days went by, he had to conclude his suspicions were unjust. Inexplicable though it seemed, she apparently meant it when she assured him she was glad to be home again, and was full of grateful expressions for the good time he had permitted her to have. She was quite ready to live up to her side of the bargain between them. Beholding her glowing beauty, her sparkling vitality, her charm, her brilliance, Sam felt he was indeed to be congratulated upon a wife who, so regally endowed, still loved him and wanted to give him a son.

It was weeks before scraps of conversations, allusions, slips of the tongue led him to suspect the real reason for her affectionate tractability. While in the French capital she had had an affair which, he gathered, had been violent on both sides. Paula had "carried on" more than ordinarily; the man had been particularly ardent and had refused to be dismissed. She had then experienced the usual reaction, had grown frightened, had thought penitently, affectionately of her husband, had wanted to hasten her return. In her demonstrativeness and her willingness to accept motherhood, Sam was ready to forgive whatever might have happened. He trusted Paula; she was a good woman; she was over the affair, and was once more all he could ask for in a wife. As far as she had been concerned, he was ready to dismiss the whole matter. But what interested him particularly in connection with the story was the fact that the man in the case was Adrian Lane.

§ 4

Some months later when the nurse, on a hurried errand to the kitchen, told him the new-born child was a girl, it was a blow. He had confidently expected a son; it had never occurred to him that Paula might not give him a boy. Chagrined, stunned, it came to him at the same moment he could never admit his disappointment to anyone.

During the long, harrowing hours of Paula's labor, he and

her father had sat before a coal fire in the parlor, a whiskey bottle between them, while heavy feet moved about on the floor above, and alternated with the complaining squeak of bed-springs. The sweet odor of chloroform and the acrid smell of disinfectants permeated the whole house.

"Vell, dat means, I guess, dat Paula vill call her 'Tillie,'—Matilda' after her Mama," said the old man carefully lifting one leg across a knee. "It vill be nice to have anudder Tillie here, von't it?"

Sam was not listening; to himself he was saying:

"A girl! . . . A daughter! . . . A girl! . . . Gee whilly-kins!"

Minutes stretched into quarters-of-an-hour,—quarters-of-an-hour to an hour. There was no further news. Silence, the slow squeaking of feet,—silence—the brisk tread of small, nimble ones,—silence,—more silence,—absolute stillness. . . . What on earth was keeping them up there? Sam rose; the liquor he had drunk for the moment unsteadied his steps. As he reached the hallway, the nurse came running downstairs.

"The telephone, Mr. Smith. I'm sorry . . . nothing to be alarmed about. Mrs. Smith is doing very nicely. . . . Dr. Swan needs a little help, that's all. . . ."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, I assure you . . ."

"Tell me. I want to know."

He stopped further evasion with a gesture.

"A hemorrhage. We're trying to stop it. Time is precious, Mr. Smith. The telephone, please . . ."

Moments dragged on endlessly. Once more, the slow squeaking of feet, the brisk tread of small, nimble ones above,—silence. The fire collapsed, settling comfortably,—Hulda moving in the kitchen,—the angry scream of cats fighting across the street,—the moaning of fog whistles from the river—silence——

The front door-bell rang.

"There he is!" Sam cried with relief. He hastened to admit the specialist.

He threw open the door. A man in a derby hat, an overcoat, with a black satchel in his hand stood there,—a man with an oddly familiar face.

"Mr. Smith's residence?" The tone was inquiring. "Doctor Swan telephoned; I'm Dr. Madison."

"Matt!" exclaimed Sam. "Well, God bless your soul! Come in. . . . You bet we telephoned. . . . It's my wife, Matt. Upstairs. Go right up; they're waiting for you. . . . I'll see you later."

§ 5

Paula looked amazingly well the morning after the baby's birth. Sam had expected her to appear haggard and beaten, for she had had a hard experience, but her color was high, her beauty never more flaming, and her mood even jocular. The ordeal, long-dreaded, was over, and she had her baby.

" 'Sylvia,'—I'm going to call her 'Sylvia.' I hate 'Paula' and Mama's name. They don't harmonize with 'Smith' somehow, but 'Sylvia Smith' sounds rather pretty. . . . Sam, why did you have to have the name of 'Smith,' and since you had it, why did your mother have to christen you 'Samuel'? I think 'Sam Smith' is just the ugliest name I ever heard. . . . If we ever have a boy, I'll call him 'John.' 'John Smith' is so commonplace, it would have distinction."

"You can call him what you like, if some day you'll have him," Sam said.

"Well, we won't talk about that *now!* . . . What do you think of your daughter? Isn't she cute?"

In motherhood Paula was charming. She was the picture of maternity. A new quality of beauty enveloped her; she grew plump, soft, gracious, an opulent sumptuousness took the place of what had been cold stateliness. The sight of her sitting in her lacy flowing gown with her drowsing daughter at her breast was so beautiful as almost to take Sam's breath away. Her baby absorbed her, delighted her. The layette she had provided was overstocked with little dresses and satin bonnets, dainty costumes of fine linen and embroidery, fur-trimmed robes and hoods. Paula had sewed unflaggingly upon these during the months before her confinement. An excellent dressmaker, herself, she had had a seamstress to help her, and the woman had been in the house almost without interruption. Paula had made maternity dresses for herself, charming negligées to be worn after the baby's coming, costumes for the child itself, suitable for every occasion. Now, she was enjoying the reward of these labors, dressing and undressing her baby, wheeling her out in her buggy to call on friends, bringing her

home to redress her for another excursion. She delighted in showing Sylvia off, and Sam was ready to admit there was no reason for apology where the little girl was concerned. Sylvia was fat, with dimpled elbows and knees, she had magnificent black eyes and hair, with her mother's warm skin and coloring. It was customary for people to turn about in the street and look after her. Sam was immensely proud.

The baby was weaned at four months. The plumpness which had immediately come upon Paula following the child's arrival, rapidly took on the proportions of fatness. Arms, legs, thighs, breasts grew round and full; she strained her clothes; the smart light tan tailor suit, she had brought back with her from Paris, was stretched tight across the shoulders and looked ready to burst at the seams. She rebelled furiously against this unwelcome obesity; it was not possible for her to diet while continuing to nurse the baby. Sylvia was weaned and the process was a long and difficult one for it was weeks before Swan was able to discover a milk formula that agreed with the child. Wails and screaming, the sound of whimpering became a daily and nightly noise in the house. Sam's poor opinion of the physician increased; he urged Paula to dismiss him and send for Matt, but his wife had no recollection of the specialist's visit and clung to the old family practitioner.

Matt had made a delightful impression upon Sam. The old friend had acquired a most agreeable address, a particularly ingratiating speech, and a distinguished manner. Always handsome he had now become especially so, a manly brand of strength and character. His features were fine,—a chiseled mouth, a sharp straight nose, a well-developed chin. Over his ears his hair had turned a becoming gray. It needed but a glance at Dr. Madison to know he was an excellent physician; he radiated intelligence, good judgment, trustworthiness. Immaculate cleanliness, stiff white cuffs, eyeglasses on a narrow black ribbon, a faint odor of antiseptics suggested him. There was no levity, no frivolity about Matt; apparently he was absorbed in his work; his practice was large, he was in demand, so busy he had not even had time to marry. He lived in a house on Fifty-third Street off Fifth Avenue, kept two servants, a valet who was also a sort of secretary, and an attendant trained nurse.

On the night that Sylvia was born, Sam had had a long

gratifying talk with him after he came downstairs at the end of half-an-hour to report that all was well. Mr. Faber had at once gone to bed, climbing to his room with a heavy hand on the banister. Doctor Swan had appeared, had congratulated the new father, and departed. There still had been whiskey and siphon water left, and some embers in the grate. Sam had replenished the fire, persuaded Matt to sit down for a chat and a drink, and there they had remained until after three in the morning, talking, talking, talking.

Sam had been deeply impressed. Here was a man of force, of character and ability, who, though still under forty, had made an enviable record for himself in a city where recognition, particularly in the medical profession, was so difficult. When Sam went to the door with him to say good night, there was an electric brougham standing at the curb into which Matt casually climbed, and casually rolled away with an easy wave of farewell.

New York was an unsatisfactory place in which to reside, Sam decided that night, when after a reassuring peep into his wife's room, he was preparing for bed. Existence in the teeming city with its insistent and varied demands dragged friends apart; there was no companionship possible between men in different walks of life. He would have enjoyed renewing relations with this old acquaintance, relations which would have permitted him, now and then, to have had lunch with him, or to have spent an evening, chatting, gossiping, exchanging ideas. He knew it was not possible.

But he had small complaint to make. Life, on the whole, satisfied him. He was pleased with the way his business was developing; he was pleased with Jerry Haines, who under his urging was becoming a hustler and acquiring an easy address with other men; he was pleased with the atmosphere that pervaded his home, with his home, itself, with his wife and baby. He felt that financially he was headed in the right direction, his feet were on solid ground, his work with a definite goal lay straight before him. He had floundered about a bit getting started; there had been the venture at Bergen Point, the association with John W. Oates, the mad period of speculation when he had thought that intelligence and shrewdness would as readily find their reward in the stock market as in any other field of endeavor. All these belonged to the past; he had learned from each. Now he was set.

With an even break of luck, he and Jerry Haines ought to do well. He found enjoyment in his new work far beyond his expectations. After making a clever bargain with a purchasing agent or persuading a customer to place an order for a hundred tons of Sloss iron,—he would get a pleasurable reaction out of all proportion to the profit involved.

§ 6

But Sam wanted a son.

A few days before Sylvia's first birthday, he made a very successful sale of a thousand tons of ferro manganese to the American Locomotive Company at a profit of thirty-eight hundred dollars. On his way uptown that afternoon he stopped at Tiffany's and bought a handsome diamond bracelet. He knew Paula loved diamonds and he liked the thought of being able to give them to her.

On the afternoon of his daughter's birthday, there was a children's party at the house. Fluff Detweiler's little eleven-months'-old girl was present, the two Bishop babies and some other toddlers. Sam arrived in the midst of torn paper caps, candy wrappings, ribbons, flustered mothers and nurses, smeared plates of ice cream, smeared faces, cake crumbs, and general confusion. The rocking-horse he had sent Sylvia, he observed with satisfaction, was conspicuous among her other gifts.

After the party had broken up, and Nora had carried the tired and tearful Sylvia away, Paula sank into an armchair and gazed ruefully at the disorder of parlor and dining-room.

"Oh, dear, it's too much," she sighed wearily. "I'm just too tired to tackle it. Let's you and I go out to the Chelsea for dinner and leave Hulda and Nora do it."

Sam then leaned over the back of her chair and dropped the suede-covered jeweler's box into her lap. Instantly her hands flew to it.

"*Sam!* What is it? . . . Presents?"

"It's for Sylvia's mother," he said touching his lips to her forehead.

A cry of breathless wonder broke from her as she raised the lid; she jumped to her feet, flung her arms about his neck, and her pecking kisses and hugs were all he could desire.

"We'll go out to dinner," he agreed, "but I won't take you

to the Chelsea. We'll go to the Café Martin and have the *table d'hote* dinner on the balcony and we'll order champagne and drink Sylvia's health."

"Oh, Sam, Sam! That will be perfectly heavenly. . . . I'll be ready in fifteen minutes."

Her fatigue vanished; she flew to her room and began to change in haste.

But she was not to be easily cajoled into maternity a second time. With contracted brows, firm lips, and determined headshakes she met argument and supplication.

"Oh, you don't know what you're asking, Sam! No man has the remotest idea of what a woman goes through. Nine months! *Nine* long weary, terrible months when you lose your figure and waddle about like a wash-woman! And at the end of the way! . . . Whew! I tell you I won't go through it again. I've given you one child and that's enough. . . ."

"But not a son, Paula. I love the baby, but Sylvia's not a son."

"How do you know a second won't be a girl, too?"

"We have to take that chance, of course. . . . If you wait, you'll never do it. . . ."

He kept at it, persistently urged his arguments, reiterating his suggestion, confident in the end if he coaxed long enough, —flattered, cajoled, placated, entreated,—he would wear down her opposition and gain her consent. She never actually gave it, she fought to the bitter end, shook her head at his pleadings with never a hint of capitulation. but Nature tricked her, and one day early in October, she told him sourly he had had his way, and that she "guessed she was in for it." He kissed her, he brought her a present; she would not be consoled. In her angry, rebellious mood, he hesitated to suggest that this time she consult Dr. Madison instead of Dr. Swan, but again events proved his allies. Swan had a breakdown; he was somewhere in an asylum in the country, quite unbalanced, they learned. Sam triumphantly telephoned to Matt's office and made an appointment for his wife to go to see him.

§ 7

Paula was never reconciled to her condition. She was petulant, irritable the whole time, and had none of the interest

in the coming of her second child that she had had in her first. Then, Fluff Detweiler had also been pregnant, the women had decided to have the experience together, and they had conferred and compared symptoms, and had kept each other company. But Fluff resolutely declined the ordeal a second time, and Paula, alone in her discomfort, was obliged to remain away from parties and affairs to which her merry little friend joyfully went and which later she bubblingly reported.

"Oh, we had the *grandest* time!" Sam, passing his wife's door, would hear this flyaway creature saying. "After the theater we all went up to Fanny's, and Perce went and got Flora Farquharson, and,—oh, my dear!—she's a perfect *peach!* You'd never *dream* she was on the stage! She's with Weber and Fields. . . ."

There was no untried excitement about a second child, no adventuring into the unknown, no thrill of a new experience. Paula stamped her foot and bit her lip when she felt wretched, her altered figure shamed her, she would not go out on the street or be seen by her friends, her mind was full of the agony that inexorably awaited her. Never in the course of their relationship had Sam exerted himself more earnestly to please and entertain her. He appreciated that it was he who was responsible for her misery, and he did all he could to make it easier. She was not to be won; at best she accepted his gifts and attentions with a mild "Thank you." Occasionally, it was evident, his mere presence irritated and made her nervous. Captious, fault-finding, she drove Nora, the capable nurse, from the house and it was weeks before she was satisfactorily replaced. The baby was kept out of her mother's way, and when Paula accused her husband and the various nurses, who succeeded one another, of a conspiracy to this end, and insisted that the child be brought to her, she soon reduced the little girl to whimpering and herself to tears. Sam brought her books, magazines, flowers, candy, and even a trinket now and then. She brushed them all aside.

"Change places with me for a week,—just a week, that's all I ask," she would complain bitterly. "That's the kind of present I'd like, and perhaps after you've endured what I'm going through for a few days, you won't be so glib about proposing my having a child again. . . ."

"Oh, I know—I know—I know," she would interrupt him

testily as he tried to comfort her. "Just shut up and leave me alone."

Troubled, even a little alarmed, Sam went to see Matt. It was clear to him he succeeded only in annoying his wife, and he was anxious solely to please. The doctor reassured him. It was a phase of pregnancy, he said; as soon as the baby arrived, she would get over it, would not remember even that she had ever been anything but sweet-tempered and amiable. He advised Sam to keep out of her way. The doctor, alone, seemed to have a soothing effect upon her; after one of his visits Paula was noticeably calmer and more resigned. Sam begged Matt to see her as often as possible.

In June, 'Trude Behlow came home from Leipsic, where she had been studying social science for three years, and went to the Smiths for a visit. Sam suggested that she and Paula go away together to some watering-place for the hot weather and mentioned several. But his wife would have nothing to do with a resort that was fashionable or where there would be people; she wanted to bury herself in an out-of-the-way spot, and she and 'Trude discovered a farmhouse in a Vermont village where she declared she would attract no attention, and where she was sure she would be satisfied. It was there, unexpectedly, two months later, that her son was born.

Following the birth, there were again complications—this time grave ones. Paula was dangerously ill, the local physician inspired little confidence, and on three separate occasions, Sam took Matt up there for consultation. He could see that Matt was concerned. The New York doctor recommended an operation; there were no facilities in the farmhouse; no hospital within forty miles; to move Paula to the city was a hazardous undertaking. It was decided however that this was the only sensible course. Reckless of expense, Sam arranged for a private car into which his sick wife, flat on a stretcher, was carefully conveyed, an ambulance was ready at the Grand Central Station, a room in a hospital and two trained nurses awaited the invalid's arrival. Forty-eight hours later the operation was performed, but before the week was out puerperal fever had set in. For a month Paula lay within the shadow of death, first with a thundering pulse and a leaping temperature, and then, when these ebbed, with a lessening and lessening vitality until injections of the most powerful stimulants alone kept her alive.

These were dark days. At home, a trained nurse wrestled for the life and health of the puling new-born child; another —a capped-and-aproned one—took charge of Sylvia and in this crisis, the faithful Hulda caught cold, developed pneumonia, and like her beloved mistress, quickly passed away.

It was Ruth who came to the rescue, dark-eyed, efficient, quiet, unobtrusive Ruth. She came in from Tarrytown, took up her abode in Sam's house, and brought order out of chaos. 'Trude Behlow was irritatingly in the way, but she played chess with the old man in the evenings, and amused him. The baby, Sam's son—little John Faber Smith,—thin, delicate, fragile, spent the first six weeks of his life on the softest of down pillows. His father regarding him with a disappointing lack of paternal emotion was only conscious of the havoc for which his small entity was responsible.

Everywhere he turned, it seemed to Sam he saw expenses mounting. His bank balance, his personal investments, everything he had saved, were wiped out; he was in debt, increasingly in debt, debt rose like a billowing tide from every side. Into his work, he flung himself harder and harder, the power of compelling other men to bow to his will came loyally to his aid. Jerry offered to stand by him, but their combined efforts, Sam sometimes feared, would not be sufficient to carry the enormous burden which kept piling up. Night after night found him at his desk in the deserted office bending under the lamp's green glass shade, computing, figuring, scheming. It was at this time, urged by his pressing need, that he secured the agency of three important blast furnaces, one in eastern Pennsylvania, another in Virginia, and the third in Birmingham, Alabama. These were excellent connections and would mean a lot of first-rate business for him and his partner in the future, but he could realize nothing on them at the moment. He was in debt to his own organization for more than eleven thousand dollars.

Looking back in after-life on the close of that year, he often wondered how he had ever pulled through it. As a matter of fact, he actually enjoyed himself. It was a magnificent fight and brought into play his every muscle, nerve, and brain cell. Many another man would have cracked under the strain, but from the very necessity that drove him, he derived strength. And in all these worries, even in the blackest hours when he was obliged to ask the servants to wait for their wages, and

the tradespeople to give him grace, he never forgot to take care of Evelyn. On the twenty-fifth of every month his check to her was in the mail.

Of just the hour and the day when the turning-point was reached and matters started to become better instead of worse, he had no consciousness. The baby began to put on weight, 'Trude Behlow took Mr. Faber and departed for a visit to her parents in Charleston, Paula was sitting up, and Ruth, who was needed in Tarrytown, borrowed Sylvia for an indefinite stay. Peace, order, and quiet descended upon the house; —for several weeks a heavenly emptiness pervaded it.

Just before Christmas, Matt said that Paula could leave the hospital. It was a joyous welcome home. Pale, thin, with black braids wound like a crown of dark leaves about her brows and with an ethereal beauty enveloping her, she came, and Sam, sitting beside her bed, her limp hand in his, studying her frail, exquisite, purified face framed in its sable aureole, thought rightly that she had never been so transcendently lovely.

§ 8

Strenuous though these months were in a domestic way, in business, his affairs flourished. His and Jerry's profits for the year were such that he could cancel his indebtedness to his firm, and start the year without owing a penny. The future promised well; the recent connections with the blast furnaces were bound to prove profitable, and Jerry had landed some excellent accounts. The price of pig iron was steadily rising, the production increasing, business looked good. Sam persuaded his partner to move into more imposing offices. They found quarters in the Trinity Building. Abner Haussmann was unearthed from a dingy printer's shop and made office manager, big Harold Webster was located in Cincinnati where he was traveling for an aluminum concern, and put to work on a part commission and part salary basis. Smith & Haines had fifteen employees on their payroll.

Absorbed in adjustments, organization, deals, lunching with mining and mill men, purchasing agents, away for a night or two at Schenectady, Allentown, Pittsburgh, spending a day at Trenton, Bridgeport, Poughkeepsie, Sam thought that he had only to make money, accumulate again a working capital, to bring to an end his worries and troubles. At home things

apparently were proceeding with an oiled smoothness they had not known for a year or more. At the beginning of January Sam had sent his father-in-law and 'Trude Behlow to White Sulphur Springs where the old man was rapidly getting rid of the touch of rheumatism that had frightened him. Both children were in good health; Rubens, the English nurse, seemed competent, resourceful, and both Sylvia and little John genuinely attached to her; there were two other excellent servants; Paula was quite herself again and her beauty was more regal than ever. When she came home from the hospital, Sam had moved himself and his clothes into another room, and since he was often late at the office, he had thought it easier to maintain the arrangement for a time at least. Both he and Paula were very comfortable. His relations with her never had seemed more satisfactory.

Just when he first began to wonder about her and Matt, he could never have said. The doctor was often at the house when he came in; he would identify his hat and coat on the hat-rack, and while Paula was convalescent but still in bed, he would hear Matt's voice in her room and the murmur of their conversation. He never intruded upon them; women, he believed, were most particular about interviewing their physicians alone. One day when Paula was well again, and had for the first time ventured downstairs, Matt called for her and took her in his electric brougham for a drive in the Park. "Decent thing for Matt to do," Sam thought gratefully. And following that, he often found the doctor calling upon Paula when he came in.

Nothing in their manner towards each other, woke those first tingling suspicions. There were no languishing looks, no holding of hands, no meaningful laughs, no changes of color. Rather did they spring from a certain barely perceptible overpoliteness, an exaggerated consideration with which each treated him. Sam dismissed his suspicions; they recurred; he dismissed them again; back they came stronger than ever to annoy and stab him. He began to watch Paula, to weigh her words, to keep check of her comings and goings. She baffled him; he could make nothing of either her mood or her sentiments. The harp remained untuned and covered; since her illness, her fingers had not so much as touched a string. She treated Matt pleasantly, cordially, hospitably, but never, that Sam could detect, more intimately. He could ob-

serve no look, no gesture, no inflection that justified his fears. Yet something deep down in his consciousness told him that matters were not as they should be; he was being hoodwinked.

Jealousy was a new experience for him. Paula was capricious, flirtatious, she thoroughly enjoyed "an affair"; these phases of her nature he knew, and while he had often considered her conduct undignified and unworthy, the fear of being supplanted in her affections had never come to him. But now arose the first prick of jealousy, and day by day, and week by week, the seeds, sown in his heart, took on new life, put forth new leaves and grew flourishingly. Here was no mimic love affair of a beautiful woman and a half-baked, calf-eyed, romantic boy; here was no fancy of an hour, no pretense of emotion in which to find amusement on a summer's day, no make-believe, no play-acting. Here was truth,—hideous reality,—stark, flaming passion!

Weeks,—months passed. The spring came daintily, trippingly, brightening the grim ugly city with vivid colors, turning the park squares glorious with flaming tulip beds, clothing the trees with emerald tints, decorating the façades of clubs and hotels with gay window-boxes. Summer breathed its hot breath hard upon the heels of the gracious season. Paula took her father, Rubens and the children, and departed for Mappahasset, Long Island, where there was a beach and the lipping waters of the Sound, swimming, boating, and occasional fishing. It took two hours on the jerking, smoking, cindery train to reach the place, but Sam made the trip week-ends until it commenced to be slowly borne in upon his unwilling consciousness that it was a matter of indifference to his wife whether he came or not. Sylvia was three, a fat, waddling, tumbling child digging in the sand with pail and shovel. Her father often wished he might play with her, but he did not quite know how to begin. Self-consciousness bound him. Still he felt he should make an effort, and it seemed almost at the very moment he would make up his mind to do so, Rubens would appear to hustle the child out of the way.

"Leave your poor tired father alone, now," she would say, seizing Sylvia about the waist and bearing her off. "He comes down for a breath of fresh air and a bit of a rest, and not to be bothered by the likes of you."

He wasn't bothered. If he started to protest, Paula silenced him.

"Leave Rubens alone, Sam. Sylvia must be washed and cleaned; she has her supper at six, and if I detain Rubens or anything comes up to make her late, she gets as cross as two sticks."

Perhaps this was right. At any rate, he was anxious to please his wife. He used to bring down small gifts when he came, but he never seemed lucky enough to find anything that particularly pleased her. Between them lay the shadow of Dr. Matthew Madison. He knew it; she knew it. They never discussed it.

Oh, if she would only "carry on," as she used to! Once he had thought it undignified. Now, how gladly would he have watched her at her old tricks; how happy if only she would once more play her harp!

§ 9

A sixteen-story building was being erected next door to the old Faber home; a year before, a factory had risen across the way; there was now a large concrete garage on the corner. The house itself was dingy, old-fashioned, the brown stone was chipped at sill and coping. Paula wanted to move; Riverside Drive drew her eye. Sam, wanting only to gratify her whims and wishes, told her to find an apartment that suited her and to furnish it to her liking. He was sorry to leave the old home, sorry to live further uptown, sorry to have to crowd into smaller quarters, sorry to discommode his old father-in-law whom he felt they were dragging up by the roots in moving him to unfamiliar surroundings. Against these considerations, there was Paula, and most of all he wanted her to be happy. She must be gratified, must be kept satisfied, must be made grateful. And she was. That, for Sam, was the hardest part.

"Ah, you know, you're really very good to me," she would tell him. "Don't think I don't appreciate it, Sam; I do—I truly do. . . . It's going to be such fun getting out of this smelly old house and out of this horribly dirty neighborhood. Fluff 'phoned yesterday, and says she's heard of a perfectly splendid apartment of eight rooms. It's in a new building and the last one left. . . ."

It was with Matt she went about to furniture dealers, to decorators, upholsterers. Matt advised, bargained, selected.

Sam's jaw shut, his bitterness grew. The truth was known to each of them by this time, and each realized that all three understood the situation. During the summer, Sam had buoyed up his spirits by telling himself that sooner or later Paula would get over the infatuation, as she had done before; Matt would turn his attentions elsewhere. But now he could no longer deceive himself.

"Very well," he thought savagely; "let's sit tight and watch this affair to a finish. The minute I suspect they're crooked, I'll get the goods on them, and brand their shame from one end of this city to the other, and I'll see to it that every morning and evening paper names Dr. Matthew Madison as co-respondent if I have to buy the advertising space and print it myself! We'll see what *that* does to his fine practice! She'll not get her children and not one damn penny of alimony!"

But all this he knew was cheapest melodrama. Paula was not the kind that would ever be unfaithful.

After the four-storied old-fashioned house with its high ceilings and generous-sized chambers, an eight-room apartment seemed small indeed. It was not without its conveniences, and Paula, at least was wholly satisfied. The living-room was fairly large and bright, had a splendid view of the river, occupying a corner of the building with windows facing south and west; one wing,—that along the front of the house,—consisted of dining-room, kitchen, and the two maids' rooms; the other contained the master bedroom, the nursery for Rubens and the children, and a small room at the end of the hall for Mr. Faber. Sam noted the twin beds, his wife had selected for himself and her. If they represented a suggestion to him of what she desired their future relation to be, he was grimly ready to accept it. He was too proud to comment upon the arrangement.

§ 10

Of even greater concern to him, at the moment, was his father-in-law, and the manner in which the old gentleman comported himself amid his new surroundings. No longer was there the familiar street upon which to look and muse, the Chess Club was now too far away for him to reach, he was uncomfortable, bored, dissatisfied. But no word of complaint passed his lips. Sam suspected he thought himself a useless

old man whose preferences were of no consequence to anyone; the world, now, belonged to a younger generation; he had neither right nor part in it. With a close guard upon his lips, he became more and more silent, and sometimes a whole day would go by with little more than a word or two from him. His son-in-law half guessed his trouble; Paula was blind to it. She was not an unloving daughter, nor an inconsiderate one, but her father's distress escaped her entirely.

"Oh, he'll get over it," she assured Sam when he mentioned the old man's silence and obvious depression. "His room's better lighted and better heated, and it's a thousand times drier in this big stone building than it ever was in that damp old house. He doesn't complain of his rheumatism nearly so much. It's far easier to keep house this way; it's just one half the work. Bella can carry in a tray to him three times a day. There's none of those awful stairs to climb. I *know* he's more comfortable."

§ 11

Paula was very proud of her living and dining-rooms. She had not stayed her hand in furnishing them, as Sam presently discovered when the bills began to come in. But he was not worried financially, as he had been the year before, for he had been buying iron on his own account, and prices had advanced. He had contracted for ten thousand tons for delivery during the first quarter of the following year, had bought it at eighteen dollars a ton and every indication pointed to his being able to dispose of it at twenty-two dollars a ton, which would net him forty thousand dollars. The Faber home had been promptly sold at a fair figure, and, with his father-in-law's approval, he had invested this money in his own business. Indulging her fancy almost without restraint, Paula selected her furniture, her table linen and appointments, her curtains and carpets, and the result filled her with the greatest satisfaction. The rooms were tasteful, but Sam did not think them particularly comfortable.

As soon as everything was in order, she gave several large, formal dinner parties. Twelve persons could be seated comfortably about her board, and she engaged an extra waiter or two to come in and help Bella. At these affairs, Matt invari-

ably was present. All the women flattered and fawned upon him. That was because he was so handsome and so glib, Sam thought sourly. The stiff dinners bored him, painfully conscious, as he was, of his inability to chatter the jargon that came so readily to the lips of his wife's guests. He found consolation in the champagne, learning if he drank enough of it, he could rid his tongue of its restraint and cease to care what the company thought of him or he of them. The evenings became a pleasing kind of muddle as the wine lifted him into a genial, talkative mood. But the next day, he would have a cheap regard for himself; first, because his overindulgence unfitted him for clear thinking; second, because of the lie he had acted,—the lie that gave the impression to those present that he had enjoyed their society and that either he was indifferent to the relation between his wife and another man, or that he was stupidly blind to it.

Where were he and Paula drifting? Was divorce the end of the way? Sam did not want to lose Paula. He was proud of her; she belonged to him; he was ready to fight to keep her. His animosity turned upon Matt,—Matt, the friend, the physician, whom he had welcomed into his home, to whose care he had confidently entrusted his wife,—this was the fellow who had insinuated himself into her affections, had alienated her from him! And yet he could not bring himself altogether to dislike Matt. The man at all times was agreeable, friendly, interesting; he was never undignified, he never treated him with anything but respectful consideration. Sam felt Matt truly liked him, and in honest moments with himself, he had to admit he liked Matt in return. But when he saw him and his wife together, or when Paula was out of the house and he suspected her to be in Matt's company, it was then that he gave rein to his feeling of hatred.

His business and his wife occupied all his thoughts and life. In the former, he expanded, enjoying every moment of the office atmosphere, his mail, contracts, orders, meetings with other men, lunches at the Hardware Club, of which he was now a member, conferences with Jerry Haines, sales managers, Haussmann's preoccupied face, the bookkeeper's never-failing obligingness. In this environment, he could forget Paula and Matt. But at the close of the day, like a swarming mass of black flies, back came his worries. How had Paula spent the morning and afternoon? Had she telephoned Matt

as soon as he had left the apartment? Had they lunched together?—gone driving together?—had tea together?

One day it occurred to him that perhaps it was the electric brougham that attracted her, perhaps she enjoyed motoring. He said nothing of his intention, but ordered a closed model of a popular make of automobile, engaged a chauffeur, and when the car arrived from the factory, had it brought around to the apartment to stand at the curb. On a pretext, he inveigled Paula downstairs and told her brusquely the car was hers. Her emotion touched him; she was overcome; he could see the muscles in her throat working. Suddenly he, too, was embarrassed. A choking sensation seized him. Abruptly he turned upon his heel and walked up the street.

§ 12

On a certain Saturday night, some weeks later, he came home from his office towards eleven o'clock exceptionally weary. The day had been long and full. He had spent most of it in Port Chester, wrangling with a stove manufacturer, who had complained about the quality of iron that had been sold him, asserting it was ruining his castings. Sam had stood over the foreman while a test had been made and had proven the fault lay in the coke that was being used. By the time he returned to the city, he had found his office empty, the clerks gone. He telephoned his home, instructed Bella to tell Mrs. Smith, as soon as she came in, that he would not be home to dinner, and turned to a heaped-up wire basket of work, happily conscious he could dispatch it all without interruption. Absorbed in his writing and figuring, he had not thought of food, and it was his aching head that drew his attention at last to the time and the surprising discovery that it was close to ten o'clock. Rubbing his eyes, he realized he was tired. Home, hot coffee, something to eat, and then bed appealed to him; he was in no mood for a noisy restaurant, the only ones likely to be open at that late hour on a Saturday night.

But when he entered his apartment, it was dark. Solomon, the elevator boy, told him that Dr. Madison had called for Mrs. Smith shortly after eight o'clock. Both the cook and Bella had gone out. Through the door of his father-in-law's room he could hear the old man gutturally snoring; the chil-

dren and Rubens had been in bed for some time. The ice-box in the kitchen disclosed nothing edible. There were the picked fowls for Sunday's dinner, a china bowl filled with neatly rolled butter balls, a jar of mayonnaise, a few tomatoes, and some heads of lettuce done up in a damp cloth. Sam's head was aching sharply now, but he determined he would not be defeated. Lighting the gas stove, he put on the coffee pot, opened a can of baked beans, dumped them in a sizzling hot saucepan, buttered bread, and arranged knife and fork and spoon with a napkin for himself at one end of the kitchen table. The food he found surprisingly good; he thought rather proudly of his efforts, and ate heartily. When he had finished, he considered whether or not he should clean up. No, he decided, the cook or Bella could do that. He had a right to come home and get something to eat for himself if he felt like it; if they objected to the mess he had made, they could take their grievances to Paula. All his thoughts were aggrieved. The week had been a hard week, the day especially a hard one. He had made a lot of money, but nobody seemed to care a damn about that! Six days of grubbing and slaving and then to come home to an empty house! . . . And it was Saturday night. He was entitled to *some* diversion, *some* relaxation.

He went into his room and tried to read; the book bored him. Paula would be in presently; he might just as well undress and get to bed; she'd surely be home before he was ready to extinguish the light. But midnight came and still there was no sign of her. He climbed into bed, adjusted pillows and light, and picked up the book again. . . . Quarter past twelve,—the half hour,—one o'clock. Where *was* Paula? He flung his book to the floor and scowled at the clock. Tick—tick—tick—tick—tick—tick. His thoughts began to wheel. He reviewed all that had taken place since Matt had crossed his path again, he speculated on his infatuation for Paula and hers for him, asking himself how far they went, what license they permitted themselves. Virtuous or not,—he would give Paula the benefit of the doubt and believe she still was that, —as a wife she was lost to him. What did he, the poor stupid husband, get out of the relationship? He made money and she spent it; he denied himself, gave her presents which she accepted with a more or less indifferent "Thank you." She wasn't even at home when he came in, dead beat from work, to fix him a pot of coffee and heat him up some beans! He

would have liked to have had someone to whom he could have told the story of that ass of a stove manufacturer up at Port Chester, and how he had not only shown him that it was the rotten high sulphur coke he was using that was the cause of all his troubles but how he had hooked him for a hundred ton order of low phosphorus at twenty-one dollars a ton! It was a good story. Jerry on Monday morning would get a great laugh out of it,—Jerry was a prince. . . . But, damn it, a man ought to have a woman to tell such things to! A man ought to come home to a wife who would laugh at his stories, sympathize with him, praise him, be indignant where he felt indignation, be elated when elation was in order! Paula had never given him that kind of sympathy. She wasn't a wife!—she wasn't a companion! What *was* she? A decoration,—nothing more. That wasn't enough for a man; he needed affection, needed tenderness, caresses,—yes, he needed a woman to cradle his head in her arms and make a fuss over him! . . . Hell! Damn! Where *was* Paula? It was half past one!

He began to grow angry. The case he had made out for himself filled him with self-pity. His wife was out whispering, laughing, and flirting with another man, they were looking soulfully into each other's eyes, and telling each other to be brave about the cross they had to bear, and what a stupid, unpoetic, unsentimental, dollar-chasing fool the man was, who was keeping them apart. And here he was, lying in bed, waiting impatiently for her to come home,—a wife who wasn't a wife,—who was probably laughing about him at that very moment! . . . God! She and Matt were right: he *was* a fool,—a ridiculous, blundering, credulous fool!

With an oath, he flung back the covers and began to dress. If she returned before he was finished, he would tell her he had only just come in,—that much grace he would give her. . . . Two o'clock; she was still not home! . . . With his jaw gripped tight and a scowl darkening his face, he put on his hat and coat, descended to the street and went out into the night. The Drive was deserted; up and down, there was no one in sight. He still hoped he might meet her. He walked toward Broadway and hailed a hansom.

"The Haymarket," he directed.

" 'Fraid it's closed, sir, at this hour."

Sam considered; he conferred with the driver.

"Well, how about the Midway, sir?" the man suggested.

"I don't care. . . . Is it gay? Girls there?"

The man laughed reassuringly.

"Very well,—that's good. Let's go there."

He climbed in, closed the doors of the cab before his knees, and turned up the collar of his coat.

§ 13

The next morning, he hated himself. His soul was in revolt, disgust rode him, he could not bring his mind to anything, he kept thinking of the sordid, degraded hours of the night. He felt besmirched, befouled, as though he had fallen down in the mud and had come back to his home with daubed and dirty clothing. Paula, his children, his old father-in-law, the servants, looked at him; he wondered if at a glance, by the remotest possibility, they could guess where he had been. . . .

§ 14

"Sam, my poy, . . . Paula, she ain'd treatin' you right." Mr. Faber slumped in his chair, gazed moodily out across the half-frozen river at the misty white banks of the New Jersey shore. His son-in-law had come home a little earlier than usual; Rubens had the children out in the Park; Paula had gone somewhere for tea; the two men were alone.

"I know it," Sam said gloomily after a moment. "Guess there's nothing to be done about it. . . . Perhaps she'll get over it."

There was a pause while the old man tugged at a dry cigar and turned the piece he wrenched from it over in his half toothless gums.

"Her Mama vouldn't have liked such goings-on."

"No, I guess not," Sam answered listlessly. "It wouldn't have happened if *she'd* been here."

"Dis feller, der doctor,—vat do you know about him?"

"Oh, Matt? Matt's all right," Sam answered, still indolent; "far as I know."

"Married?"

Sam shook his head.

"You've talked to her?" persisted Mr. Faber.

Again the head-shake. After a moment, Sam said:

"I don't honestly think it would do any good. Paula's high-spirited, you know. She'd fly up at the least hint of criticism——"

"Vell, vat of it?"

"I don't like to anger her. Maybe she'll get over it,—maybe she won't. Talking to her won't do any good."

§ 15

Three days later. He found Paula reading in bed. The lamp in a rose-colored shade beside her cast a soft light upon her face, the filmy lace of her night-gown, her round white column of throat, tinting the flesh a lovely pink. She was beautiful to look upon. As he began to undress, she closed her book and for a moment or two silently regarded him.

"I understand you have been discussing me with my father," she said evenly.

He made no answer, instantly sensing a scene, preparing his defenses. Methodically he went about hanging up his clothes.

"I think it was *he* who brought the subject up," he observed presently.

"And you agreed with one another—perfectly." Her tone was acid.

"I don't recall there was anything to agree about," he said glancing at her now for the first time. She returned a cold stare.

"If you have any criticisms of me or my conduct," she said icily, "I prefer you make them to me directly."

"I have none,—and I've made none."

She twisted her lips, her brows faintly puckered, touched the locks at her temples with an arranging hand, and picked up her book. After a minute, she commenced to speak again, but now her eyes did not leave the page before her.

"I am fully aware of my obligations as a wife, Sam, and I propose to live up to them. . . ."

She paused, and in the moment's hesitation, he could not repress a sniff.

She dropped her book, and turned upon him sharply.

"What do you want me to do? *Pretend* something I do not feel?"

He did not answer. Bitterness rose strongly within him.

"You might just as well understand my position, now, as at any other time," Paula continued, frowning as she concentrated on her words. "Matt and I are congenial; we are fond,—yes, we are *extremely* fond of one another; I won't deny that. You, I daresay, have told my father we are in love with each other! Very well, let it go at that. You are my husband and the father of my children; I have made a contract with you, and I am fully conscious that I have a profound obligation in regard to them. I do not propose to be false to either. You are often kind and considerate of me. I appreciate it. You do the best you can. I am ready to give you everything a wife can give you except my soul. That belongs to me. It belongs to *me,* understand,—and not to you or to *any* man. Were a divorce possible, I should not want it. I have no desire to marry Matt, nor does he, I believe, wish to marry me. It would hurt him professionally, and marriage would spoil our friendship. We like to be together; that is all, and that is all we ask. I make an effort to do everything I can for you as your wife, but I cannot surrender what is beyond my will power to give. Let me repeat: that is mine. As long as I bear your name, as long as the same roof covers us, you can depend upon my dealing fairly with you. I feel that this is enough. So much I can give,—no more. And you have not the right to demand more."

He went on unlacing his shoe. He did not propose to be tricked into angry recriminations. He knew the hopelessness of an argument.

"Sam. . . ." No reply. He still bent over his shoe.

"Sam. . . ." Her tone had lost its steeliness; it was entreating

"Sam!" Now it was imperative. He looked up.

"Come here." Again it had softened, and she patted the side of her bed, inviting him to sit beside her, and when reluctantly he came, she reached for his hand, and drew it to her so that she could take it in both of hers.

"Sam, I'm really fond of you," she said; "I respect you, and in many ways, I admire you,—but we never should have married. I was too young to know my own mind; I did—I did what my parents told me. And you,—you've never truly

loved me. It's too bad, isn't it? No, let me finish," she insisted as he started to interrupt; "I'm one sort of person; you're another. We are as widely separated as the poles. Perhaps you don't see that, but *I* do. I'm not the kind of a wife for you,—I *know* I'm not; you're not the husband for me. Neither of us is to blame. It's just a cruel fate that has bound us together. I think each of us should try to make the best of things. There's Sylvia and Johnny. They're going to need us when they grow older. I hate divorce and I hate divorced people. I'll be the best wife I can to you, Sam. . . ."

§ 16

A Superba!

He ran his fingers gently, almost caressingly, over its high polished surface, walking about it admiringly, while the salesman bowed and hovered about him, chanting its praise. A *Superba!* A wonderful car. Sam admired it tremendously, admired the graceful lines of its design, the craftsmanship displayed in every detail, the prodigal care and lavishness of its manufacture, its aristocracy and fine superiority. He had but to look at it, had but to put his hand on its wheel, to sense the power that lay within it—fire, force, endurance, all slumbered here. Well-planned, well-made, a Superba would carry him far. Everything about the car delighted him: its powerful headlights, its shining, nickel-plated radiator, its great black spreading fenders, its glossy surface, rich black, trimmed with a fine line of red, with red spokes and hubcaps, its luxurious finish, the silk curtaining, the small appointments, the velvet upholstery,—all these were perfection. The car was built like a greyhound, closely suggesting the animal, —high-strung, graceful, beautiful. Whenever he fancied people seeing him riding in such a car, he glowed with satisfaction; the thought filled his mind and soul to overflowing. He longed to possess it, to have it belong to him, to have people say, "There goes Sam Smith riding in his Superba," or "Who's that millionaire riding in a Superba?"

"Send the contracts down to my office and I'll sign them and return them with my check by your own messenger," he said to the delighted salesman, and strode out of the gilded showroom into the wet and gusty street.

§ 17

Like the inexorable closing of iron jaws, Mr. Faber's rheumatism shut down upon him. The joints in his bloodless, withered anatomy slowly turned into hard-yielding rusty hinges. Motion cost him excruciating pain. Stealthily, relentlessly, rigidness crept upon him. He could no longer walk, he could no longer move. His faculties were left him, however,—eyes, voice, hearing,—and the articulation of the fingers of one hand. He held a wooden stick in these, to the end of which was tied a small ball of linen. With this he could touch his face, and wipe away the tears which weakly trickled out of his rheumy old eyes and coursed down his clean wrinkled cheeks.

And in the grip of this death-in-life, a strange felicity and repose descended upon him. Once having bowed his head to his fate, the fear that had pursued him for ten years evaporated, and in its place there came resignation. For half a decade he had suffered far more mentally than he had done physically since the calamity had fallen.

Sam did everything possible to make the invalid comfortable and to contribute to his few remaining pleasures. A day nurse and a night nurse were constantly in attendance, a special bed and mattress were constructed, the old man's food was particularly prepared. Paula was not behind her husband in these ministrations; she did what she could, but father and daughter had never been congenial. Mr. Faber enjoyed his grand-children, Johnny in particular. He liked to have the little boy and his sister come into his room with their toys, and prattle and play about on the floor. He liked to have the paper read to him, and every afternoon for two hours he liked to listen to the phonograph and the tunes from the "Mikado," "Robin Hood," and the "Geisha." But most of all he loved Sam's visits and to hear from his vigorous son-in-law the details of his day, business deals and business plans. His watery eyes would light up when Sam's firm step sounded in the hall. At a fearful cost to his affairs and to himself, the younger man made it a practice to stop in to see him late every afternoon, and to sit and gossip for a while. No matter what circumstance was pressing, who waited, what question needed answering, at five-thirty, Sam reached for his hat and

coat, and hurried out to catch the El'. At six, he knew the old man would be expecting him.

But one day, an hour came, and when it was passed, the sacrifice was no longer demanded of him.

§ 18

A letter from Evelyn.

La Crescenta, Monday, March 28.

Dearest Sammy-boy—

We had a grand day yesterday. Mr. Brooks—Elsies boss—sent his car out to us with his driver and we took a lunch and the children and went out to the beech. The day was a beautiful day the girls went in and Elsie and I laid on the beech and just baked in the sun. There wasn't the least little bit of wind blowing and the ocean was as calm as a pond. The girls are growing up splendid. Mazie is 15 now and next year she is going to go to a college thats near here and shes going to learn to become a teacher. Susan (I guess I like her a little the best of the two) says shes going to do egzackly like Mazies doing and I dont know why teaching aint as good a way of earning a living as any other. Susans (shes two years younger then Mazie) is only 12 months behind her at school and she'll be able to go to college just a year from next Septembre. Elsie and I are talking about keeping her at home here for a year or two. Dont you think 14 is a whole lot too young for a girl to enter college?

We are getting along fine. You mustn't send me extra money. The last check you sent me I put in the bank and I never spent a nickel of it. Guess I have nearly $1800 saved up and someday Im going to do something real silly with it. But we really have all the money we need. Elsie gets a regular income you know from what her husband left her and this and what she earns at Mr. Brooks office plus my fifty brings our income up to $232.50 a month which is plenty. Taking care of the house doesn't tire me a bit and I really love it. I always lay down for an hour in the morning and for an hour and maybe longer in the afternoon and I'm really quite well. I get kind of short of breath now and then but Dr Rosenbaum says thats nothing. But oh Sam—if it was really killing me to do the little I *do* do I wouldn't quit. To be doing *something*—to be taking care of somebody your fond of—thats living and being cooped up in a hospital and being told what you can and cant do and being waited on by cross and crankly old nurses thats death and I'd rather die than go back to it. I'm being of some use to somebody out here—I *know* it—and living without being of some use to somebody aint worth while.

Oh Sammy! I wish you could come out here and see us one of these days. You've been promicing and promicing you'd do it ever since you shipped me to Douglas. Dont your busness ever take you out to Los Angeles? I want you to see our girls—Sammy-boy—like everything. They're really awfully nice girls and they've heard an awful lot about you. Mazie kind of got twisted over your name the other

day and finally she came out with *Uncle* Sam. I had to laugh right out loud. The idea of you wearing a plug hat and straps round your boots was too much for me. Of course we couldn't offer you anything or even put you up but sometime *soon* you've got to see our bungalow and meet Elsies girls. We grow marygolds and nasterchums all along the front of the house and you ought to see your little old Ev who you picked out of a city ward as good as a goner sprinkling away like mad every morning.

Thanks for the photo of the family but of course I missed you. Where were you? You wrote Palm Beech on the back and I suppose that thats where the family went this winter. And you? I cant picture you sporting at Palm Beech or any other place thats swell like that. I dont mean that you aint a swell Sammy but you aint the kind that wears a straw hat on the side of your head carries a cane and swaggers round in white pants in winter time. Your wife certainly is a grand looking woman. She must be very beautiful. And Sylvia! Hasn't she grown up? Guess she must be about 7 now isn't she? She has the sweetest little smile—kind of like yours Sammy. *Really.*

Sam—I got to tell you something. I dont much like to do it. I had a message the other day. Austins dead. A lawyer I never heard of wrote me and wanted to know if I was going to put in a claim against his estate. Austin died without a will but I aint got a notion how much he was worth and Sammy I dont care. I dont want anything to do with him dead or alive. In the letter the lawyer wrote his name Edgar Plötz which you know was really his but I didn't recognize it first off and thought he'd made a mistake in writing me. Maybe I'm a widow now. Maybe I aint. Guess I'll never know.

It kind of jarred me just the same hearing about his death. It brought back a lot of memories I thought I'd forgotten and it came back to me while I was thinking things over like its come back to me a million times how awful good you was to me. Oh you was *awful* good to me Sam. You have always been good. I owe everything in the world to you—yes *everything.* First of all theres my life. I'd of died up there in that ward at North Brothers Island if you hadn't of shipped me south. And then theres something else I owe you that I value a heap sight more than my life and thats a kind of goodness that I know is in me now because of your goodness. Then last of all and I guess best of all are my two girls—Elsies girls but mine too because since they were teeny I've done as much and I guess more for them than she has. I love them more than anything else in the whole world Sammy-boy and I owe them both and being able to love them like I do to nobody else in the world but just *you.* Oh yes I do. I know what I'm talking about. You did it and I cant do more than just say Thank you Sammy-boy *I owe you everything.*

Someday you're going to drop everything you're doing back there in New York and you're going to jump a train and come out here and see us. Thats what I long for most. If I was a praying woman guess thats what I'd pray for. At any rate there aint a day goes by that I dont think about it and wish for it. I want the girls to know you and I want you to know them. Guess I talk about you a lot but you've got to forgive me that. Oh Sammy-boy you dont know how sometimes I live over and over those old days and how I remember

the way we struggled and skimped together and how happy—how *awfully* happy we were and how I threw it all away for a cheap salary in a bum show! *Money!* I cant write about it but if ever a girl was punished for wanting the easy things of life and running away from the hard ones that girls me. Elsie and I talk things like this over a lot and we dont want the girls to get any such ideas into their heads. Thats why we are sending them to school to learn how to become teachers. If I can make them see the things in this tough old world as they really are Sam then in a way I'll feel that all I went through and all the tough breaks I've had and pain I've known have not been wasted. . . .

§ 19

He read the letter twice, slowly, half-smiling. Evelyn had improved in the way she wrote. He brought to mind her first letters. He folded the sheets carefully into their original folds and replaced them in the envelope. She had turned into a fine woman, had changed a great deal; well, he guessed, she had suffered a great deal. He decided he would have to make that trip out to the coast soon; he'd like, mighty well, to see Evelyn again, and find out how she was looking, and know those two kids of hers. . . . It would be fun. . . . George! he'd *love* to see Evelyn again!

Well, just as soon as he closed negotiations with the Wyland Grant people, he'd pack his grip and skip out to California. . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

§ 1

The War,—the World War. The news reached him while on his way to New Orleans by steamer to inspect a blast furnace at Birmingham he had been thinking of purchasing. He had thought that after he had finished looking the plant over, he would take that jump out to Los Angeles and pay the long contemplated visit to Evelyn. "A hundred golden hours by sea" the steamship company's advertisement read, and the thought of the restful days on the water had its appeal. The summer had been hot, the hotel where he had been living since the apartment was closed, was stuffy and uncomfortable; he was tired and jaded, his digestion troubled him, he felt in general bad shape. Paula had gone down to Mappahasset as soon as John and Sylvia came home from school, and ever since she had had a houseful of company. He had no desire to join them, knowing well her style of entertainment: lots of dressing, bridge, morning, noon, and night,—high-brow chatter about art and music; Matt was off with some medical friends on a fishing expedition, and without Matt there wouldn't be a soul for him to talk to! The trip to New Orleans by sea had lured him; he needed relaxation and rest; Jerry had urged it, and now he was on his way.

The wireless brought the news: *Germany invades France,—Russia invades Germany,—England debates supporting her allies.* Infuriatingly meager, no way to confirm or amplify, no way to ascertain how the market had reacted or the country had accepted the news, no way to talk things over with Jerry,—three days out of New York, two from New Orleans. Guesses, conjectures, opinions,—the passengers collected in groups, dissolved into other groups to guess, conjecture and opine afresh. Sam strode the deck, teeth clenched, frowning, irritable, impatient of questions, wondering if he could bribe the captain to set in closer and send him ashore in a boat. Savannah? Key

West? They must be somewhere near one or the other of these places!

For the rest of his life he remembered vividly his last night on board. The steamer was plowing northward through the Gulf, the water, oily, black, rippleless, lifted and sank in long slow heaving undulations, no breath of wind stirred; the heat was thick, moist, and enervating; at various points on the horizon, thunder-storms played, lightning illuminating the mass of cumulus clouds through which they darted. It was too hot to sleep; the passengers crowded along the deck rails, opened their collars, and bared their heads to the night air; stillness held the world about them broken only by the wash and leap of the bow waves as the steamer cut its way through the water, and the rhythmic pound of the engines. At two o'clock, in the far distance ahead, Sam thought he saw a pin-point of light; it was gone, in a moment it was back; others saw it; there was a general inhalation of relief, murmurs, whispering, suppressed nervous laughter. The lighthouse at the southernmost tip of the Mississippi delta!

The next day, he caught the first train for New York, buying newspapers as he went. Every instinct in him was aroused; here was a crisis,—a colossal crisis! What was to happen? Panic? Ruin? Dissolution? A terrific situation suddenly presented itself. Brains counted in such moments; it was the man with the quick perception who saved himself from catastrophe and who benefited himself in the universal upheaval.

How long would the war last? How long would the war last? How long would the war last? He wearied of the question. It was on every man's tongue, everyone expressed an opinion, nobody knew. Six months was the consensus of opinion. He agreed at first. The Germans would take Paris and that would be the end, but when England entered the arena, he was not so sure. He could not conceive of Great Britain being beaten. A conversation with Mr. Breckinridge just at this time strengthened the feeling that the struggle might last years instead of months.

Mr. Breckinridge had severed his connection with the Fourth National Bank and was now associated with a banking house of international repute. One day toward noontime, Sam encountered him in the elevator of the Trinity Building. Both men, it appeared, happened to be in quest of a quick lunch; they decided to eat it together. In the talk that took place in

the brief twenty minutes they sat together in a cheap basement restaurant, the thought which was to actuate Sam for the next four years, first came to him. Breckinridge made two pregnant observations. It was universally believed that financial considerations would prevent the war from being fought to any definite conclusion,—the great moneyed interests of the world would stop it; Sam's companion took a contrary view and asserted that the credit of the warring nations was unlimited and that each one could go on borrowing as long as there was anything left to borrow. His second observation had to do with England: England's leadership among the nations of the world was doomed; if Germany triumphed, then Germany would dominate; if Germany was defeated then the United States would step to the fore and become Europe's creditor.

§ 2

Depression like a shawled old woman, presided over Wall Street and the business world. The activities of Smith & Haines, like those of every other mercantile house, came abruptly to a standstill. Cancellations of orders poured in, it was as impossible to sell a ton of iron as it was to borrow money at anything less than usury rates. Moratoria in all the belligerent countries were declared; foreign debts became "frozen credits"; farm products moving toward the seaboard were suddenly cut off from export; cotton prices took a sharp tumble, affecting country merchant and banker alike; emergency currency under the Aldrich-Vreeland Act, which had been fortunately extended for another twelve months, alone prevented a panic. Sam, after a consultation with his partner, shut down all the furnaces they controlled or owned, and closed the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh offices, reducing the payroll to as low a figure as possible.

"Mark time, boys," he said to Jerry, big Harold Webster and Haussmann as they sat about his desk; "we'll have to wait until we see which way the cat's going to jump. Personally, I think we're in for big times, but it's stagnation at present. Business is not to be had, and so we might just as well mark time."

He made up his mind to go down to Mappahasset, stay there for a time, and think things over. The rumors flying

about Wall Street, in the clubs, hotels, and among men, were over the long distance telephone; the house party had broken up at the first breath of war, the guests scurrying off to look after their individual interests; she and the children were alone and they'd love to have him come down. The first week in September, Sam directed Dwiggins to bring the Superba around to his hotel, loaded it with his luggage and golf clubs, established himself as comfortably as possible in the back seat, and set off on the long three-hour run down the Island to his summer home. It was there the news of the battle of the Marne reached him.

§ 3

Four years before, he and Paula had bought the Creswell place of seven and a half acres at Mappahasset and had built the winged frame house which Paula christened "Merrywold." It stood on a prominence of rock and sand a quarter of a mile back from the water, and tumbling away from it on every side were ragged ranks of larches, dwarf conifers and brush. Though exposed to the wind, which Sam hated, and the thunder-storms that blew out of the northwest, which he equally despised, it had a magnificent view, and on very clear days the distant Connecticut shore could be discerned from its porch. To Sam, the place had always been a disappointment. When first discussed, he had visualized a house that was to be spacious and imposing. The architect's drawing certainly made it appear so. The details and the supervision of its construction he had left to his wife, and the building was nearly completed when he first saw it. Since the scheme had been wholly Paula's, and she had seemed pleased with the result, Sam said little of his dissatisfaction. It was the pleasanter and easier course. It had been a great discovery for him when he learned how much better, happier, and more contented he was in ceasing to care about his wife's comings and goings, her likes or dislikes, about anything she did. He no longer troubled himself regarding her feelings for Matt or any other man. As his wife, he still entertained a certain feeling of pride in her; he was glad she bore his name and that ostensibly she belonged to him, for she was beautiful and carried herself with an air, arraying herself fashionably, often magnificently. He liked to see her dress well, never discouraged her in buying

the gowns, hats, or wraps she fancied, and withal, did not consider her extravagant. She had a generous but by no means a large allowance for household expenses and for clothes and usually she stayed within its limits. Occasionally, she asked him to send a certain department store or her dressmaker a check, when her account at one or the other grew to larger proportions than she liked, and always he did so without comment. Every now and then he bought her jewelry,—usually diamonds. These, he was aware, she frequently exchanged for something which better pleased her fancy, but this did not trouble him. He liked to see her be-jeweled. The picture she made upon entering a room, sparkling, flashing, superbly gowned in black velvet or gold brocade, never failed to give him a thrill of pleasure.

A curious result of the affair between Paula and Matt had been the creation of a close bond of new friendship and understanding between the doctor and himself. Whether or not Paula still cared for Matt in the old heart-burning way, Sam did not know; the doctor had become more or less of a permanent factor in her life just as her husband was. But Matt's feelings with regard to Paula were still the same; he was as devoted to her as ever. But Paula was not a woman whose interests could long be monopolized by any one man. On a certain day while he was dressing, Sam had been suddenly electrified to hear again the tinkle of the harp. A glance into the living-room revealed his wife with the gold instrument resting on her shoulder, practising one of her old "show-off" pieces. Interested, he set himself to watch developments. Within the week he encountered Cecil Craddock, a young Scotsman, who had unusually pale blue eyes, fine wavy yellow hair, and would some day be Lord Cairngorm. Mr. Craddock wrote verses and also amused himself with the violin. Thereafter, Sam often heard the mournful whine of his strings and the accompanying plucking of the harp. Matt's chagrin, however, was very real, even tragic. The young scion of Scottish nobility was obliged shortly to return to his native heath, and within the year Mr. Jack Hart made his appearance. Hart was a likable fellow, a Harvard boy, who had followed Villa in Mexico and had written some very creditable newspaper accounts of his experiences. Again the harp was unsheathed from its cover, was put in tune, and once more its running light arpeggios sounded through the apartment.

Sam felt sorry for Hart, who obviously was deeply smitten, and even greater sympathy for Matt. He and the doctor never discussed the situation, but they grew nearer together. With the passing of Craddock and Hart, Matt was ostensibly restored to favor, but it did not affect his new relation with Sam. The latter congratulated himself he had never cared about Paula as Matt did. The doctor was plunged into the throes of a devastating jealousy when some other man caught her fancy; he grew sallow, gaunt-eyed, feverish. Sometimes Sam wondered what he himself would have done had he ever loved Paula with such intensity. Fortunately, Paula had never mattered to such a degree.

§ 4

A more important concern with him were his children, each of whom was a disappointment; they were not the type of children he admired. He loved them, he was always ready to give them presents, or to arrange an outing or an entertainment for them, but he derived no satisfaction out of their society, nor did they find enjoyment in his. In the first place, Sam considered, Sylvia should have been the boy and John the girl. There was practically nothing feminine about Sylvia; she had a voice like a steam siren, was constantly falling over her own feet, bumping into things, and butting her hard head into people's backs and stomachs, or thumping them with sound blows from her hands that were knuckly and blistered. She had a wide slash of a mouth that stretched readily into a frank, likable grin, big white even teeth, tumbling black locks, black brows and lashes which made her face far from unattractive; but she was wholly indifferent to her looks or the care of her person, and gave the impression always of being unkempt and hoydenish. She amused her father frequently with her outlandish antics, but she never charmed him. Paula struggled to do what she could with her daughter; there was a dancing master to inculcate grace, a music teacher to impart music, a governess to admonish, direct, and subdue. Sylvia was indifferent to them all. She was wild, uncontrollable, obstreperous.

John, on the other hand, was gentle and soft-spoken. He was under-sized,—would always be small, with small hands

and feet,—and possessed dreamy eyes and a dreamy voice. He was ever ready to curl up into somebody's lap and be read to. His easy affection appealed to Sam; Sam liked his son's soft, little warm hand, his curly black head against his shoulder, and his sweet, young cheek against his own, but the boy unfortunately was shrinking, sensitive, inordinately shy.

In the hope of imbuing manliness into him, he was sent at an early age to a military boarding-school, and to impart grace and charm to Sylvia, the girl was placed in Miss Avery's Select School for Young Ladies at Riverdale.

Sam frowned whenever he thought of his children. He should have enjoyed, so well, a different kind of daughter and son,—children, for instance, like Narcissa's Mary and her boy, Sam. His niece was married now, and had followed her Navy Lieutenant to Manila the year before, whence she wrote her mother enthusiastic letters. The boy had just completed his college course at Harvard; he had gone to England for the summer and was to return after his vacation to enter the grocery business and be trained to take charge eventually of his father's great string of stores. Sam Holliday, his uncle considered "a corker,"—a fine young fellow, muscular, handsome, manly, who had played left field on the University baseball nine, had been business manager of the *Crimson,* had been elected to all the college societies, and was popular with girls and men alike. His uncle often found himself wishing he could "do" something for this namesake of his, give him a trip around the world, a fine motor car, something that would make the boy grateful, but his nephew had all these things. Phineas was a very wealthy man, now; he was rated in Dun's as many times a millionaire; he gave his son a generous allowance, Narcissa showered gifts upon him, his car was a high-powered roadster that had a specially designed body. Withal, he did not appear spoiled. Sam could only look admiringly upon him, half wishing the boy would get himself in trouble and come to him for advice and help. Whenever young Holliday was in New York, his uncle urged him to come to dinner, and invited him to the theater afterwards. Where his sister's likable son was concerned, he knew he could depend on Paula. She was always gracious to the attractive youth.

§ 5

His thoughts were upon the young man, now, as Dwiggins turned the limousine into the sand road that led straight from the highway to Mappahasset. The boy was still in England, from last reports. The plan had been that he should return by the end of the month; presumably he was there yet or perhaps on his way home. During the exciting days when war was being declared, he had been in London, and was certain to have some interesting accounts of his experiences. Sam thought he would like to hear them; he decided to write Narcissa without delay, and ask about the lad.

His mind carried him, as everything carried him these days, back to the war; the public did not begin to appreciate how tremendous, how far-reaching the struggle was to be; the press did not either; he had seen no indication of it in anything he had so far read; the Germans undoubtedly would capture Paris, but what then? The French weren't going to capitulate with that. And what about England?

The car turned in at the entrance of "Merrywold." Some day he must build a stone archway there with big swinging iron gates, and some day he must enclose the whole property with a stout iron fence. The larches, dwarf conifers and brush, the shifting gray sand beneath them, the bedraggled-looking mallow and sea cabbage, the struggling patches of periwinkle that bordered either side the curving road did not represent his idea of what ought to be the approach of a successful New Yorker's country home. The house with its colorless gables, and its gray clapboarding looked cold, bare, weather-beaten. It did not satisfy him. He wanted an estate with a turreted mansion in the midst of a park. That was the kind of a home that would please him, that would be the kind of place to which he would be proud to invite his friends. When he could afford it, that was the type of home he was going to have, and it should be nearer the city too, so that he could get some use out of it, and not let Paula have it all to herself, running it the way she liked!

Up to the last steep grade the car mounted, the tires skidding in the treacherous fine sand—another circumstance about the place that always irritated him! No decent road could ever be built on such a bottom. Sand—sand, it was all sand!

He got it on his hands, in his eyes and teeth. He never should have allowed himself to be persuaded by Paula to buy the property. It was all wrong; all a mistake. . . .

Sylvia came leaping down the steps as the car finally stopped before them, catapulted herself upon him, flung her stout young arms about his neck, knocked his derby hat into the road, and gave him a hard, savorless kiss. She looked on with a toothy grin while Dwiggins unloaded her father's luggage.

"Oh, you're going to stay quite a while, Daddy?" she cried, with an inquiring inflection.

"Are you glad?" he asked smiling down at her.

"Sure!" She jerked at his hand.

He looked affectionately upon her and tried to pat her head, pleased that this should matter to her, but she dodged and began jumping up an down chanting:

"He's going to stay,—he's going to stay,—he's going to stay. . . ."

She followed him up the steps continuing her hopping and her shrill sing-song.

The porch was broad, a white-and-blue striped awning covering it. It was comfortably arranged with wicker furniture, lounge chairs and tables, beneath which Navajo blankets were spread. A maid he had never seen before appeared and began to assist Dwiggins with the bags.

Sam mounted to his room, knocking at his wife's door as he passed. There was no answer; he looked in and found the chamber empty. The maid informed him that Mrs. Smith was down on the shore. His own room looked circumspectly in order with chintz curtaining, chintz-covered cushioned chairs, and a chintz spread on the bed. It struck him as uninviting, a room little used or occupied, cheerless and cold, —a guest room. The day was cold, the whole house cold. He concerned himself with his unpacking. Downstairs Sylvia was still jumping and piping her irritating refrain. Every time her feet hit the floor, the building shook.

He found John presently in the sun room over the porch. The boy lay upon a wicker couch curled about a book. He looked up, a slow pleased smile upon his face as his father entered.

"Hello, Dad," he said in a surprised, indolent voice. His arms reached up and went about his father's neck as Sam

stooped to kiss him. "I didn't know you were coming down to-day."

Sam picked up the book. *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* by Selma Lagerlöf. He had never heard of it or of the author; he returned the volume silently.

"Where's your mother?" he asked, after a moment, although he remembered the maid had told him.

"Don't know."

Sam looked out of the window across the sand dunes and the wind-whipped larches and dwarf conifers to the placid reach of gray water beyond that stretched far away to an invisible meeting with a colorless sky. A scarf of smoke marked the course of a steamer; closer in a pleasure schooner heeled smartly in the breeze.

"Been swimming to-day?" he inquired.

John shook his head.

"Did you go boating or fishing?"

"Tennis?" he persisted at the negative answer in his son's eyes. "What *have* you been doing?" he demanded suddenly interested.

The boy squirmed uncomfortably.

"Oh, nothing," he said; "just fooling 'round."

"Well, what did you do yesterday? How did you occupy yourself?"

John frowned in distress and squirmed more vigorously.

"Just nothing; fooling 'round, that's all," was his unsatisfactory reply.

His father felt a sudden compunction. He ran his fingers through the boy's tight black curls affectionately, and for a moment stood wondering what strange fate had bequeathed him so odd a son. He turned, but at the door the boy's thin voice arrested him.

"Dad . . ."

"Yes?"

"What's 'crenelated' mean?"

"What's what?"

" 'C-r-e-n-e-l-a-t-e-d,' " John spelled it carefully, his finger following each letter on the page before him.

Sam scowled. He went back and picked up the book, studying the word.

"Give it up, Johnny," he admitted at length; "you'll have to ask your mother."

He strode away still frowning. . . . Crenelated? Crenelated? . . . He knew the word! . . .

Strange boy! . . . Perplexing boy!

§ 6

He met Paula sauntering up the narrow board-walk that dipped and rose over the sand dunes between the house and the beach. She carried a parasol over her shoulder,—a vivid yellow with saffron ribbons cascading from its handle,—and books beneath her arm. Her broad floppy straw hat was yellow and yellow roses garlanded its crown. Over her shoulders and almost covering her white linen gown was draped a plain yellow silk shawl bordered with long dangling fringes. The effect of her raven black hair, her dark brows and lashes, her warm-toned, Spanish skin amidst so much pervading yellow was startling. As she came toward him, she reminded him of the days when she used to saunter beside the Kill von Kull to meet him when he came home from the mill. . . . Damn it! She was a changed woman since those days!

She welcomed him with a pleased smile.

"You came after all!" she exclaimed. "I was afraid you'd be kept. What's the news? Not Paris yet, I hope."

He told her what he knew. The board-walk did not permit of two persons walking abreast; he plodded after her as she proceeded.

"It's such a bore," Paula said, sighing. "How long do you think it will last?"

"Kitchener says two years."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"And I think he is underestimating it at that."

"Why! . . ." she began in an exasperated voice, but she did not finish.

They walked on together.

"How long will you be able to stay?" she inquired presently.

"Oh, I don't know," he said vaguely. "Two or three days,—perhaps a week. I hope to get in some golf and I want to do some thinking. . . . Why? Are you giving a party? Expecting somebody?"

"Not a soul. Hope you'll stay. It's quite lonely down here without anyone. I shall be glad when we break up."

"When is that?"

"The twentieth. I'll have to give a week to getting the children ready for school."

They continued to talk of plans and after a little, their sauntering pace brought them to the house.

"How do you think John's getting on?" Sam abruptly asked.

"Oh, all right."

"Do you think he is well,—healthy?"

She shot him an inquiring glance. "Perfectly," she said with assurance. "Why do you ask? What do you think's wrong with him?"

"I don't know. He seemed rather indolent and indifferent when I was talking to him a little while ago. He doesn't take any exercise; and he's got no get-up-and-get to him."

His wife gave him an amused indulgent smile and began to mount the steps.

"Oh, that's just John," she said negligently. "You don't see him enough. If the house caught fire, he'd stroll out of it; don't ever expect him to run."

When she reached the porch she paused a moment, closing her parasol.

"I'm going over to the Davises to-night for bridge. I don't suppose you'd come?"

"Not with that tight-wad," he answered frowning.

"Why not, Sam? You might really enjoy it."

"No, thank you. I have some work to do."

"Well, I sha'n't leave until eight and I told Mary I'd have a bite of something in my room,—what I eat is so microscopic these days."

"Oh, that's all right," he said hastily. The idea of Paula sitting through dinner with him was almost alarming. He shrank at the thought of the effort it would cost to make talk with her.

"Well, the children will keep you company. They dine at six." With a nod she passed into the house.

§ 7

Dwiggins drove him every day for golf to the Country Club, —an hour's ride. Sam played eighteen holes in the morning, and eighteen in the afternoon, and lunched at midday on rare roast beef, hard Graham toast, and unsweetened tea. His game

annoyed him. He had a terrific drive, but his approach shots were either too long or too short, and invariably he wasted from one to two strokes on every green. As a pastime he would have abandoned the sport, for it irritated and put him in sour temper, but he believed the exercise reduced his weight which had come to be a source of real mortification. Powerful though he knew himself to be, his girth had increased to such proportions that he passed for a fat man. Whenever he beheld a silhouette of himself in a window or looked in a mirror, he was reminded of Lyman Baxter; "fat little Ly'" his wife's boarders had called him in derision. . . . No doubt the clerks of Smith & Haines spoke of himself as "fat little Smith," or "fat little Sam!"

He used to grit his teeth and swipe with all his might at the white pellet. It satisfied him gloriously when the ball would soar straight and true into the air and keep on rising and traveling long after an ordinary drive would begin to descend. There was always a little gasp of admiration from the onlookers. But after that, there might follow showers of turf and sand, oaths, lost balls. Nine times out of ten his second shot involved him in trouble. He took lessons; he handed the professional a five-dollar bill at the end of each hour's instruction, and liked to believe that the man meant it when he told him he was improving, and had the potentialities of a great golfer; he tipped the caddies prodigally and it pleased him to note a keen rivalry among them as to who should carry his clubs.

Beyond the exercise, which he really enjoyed, he derived pleasure from meeting other business men on the links, and if he did not happen to know them, he made an excuse to converse. His touch with his own sex was sure. Men invariably liked him; his opinions were sought and quoted, his stories brought laughs, he was introduced to visitors, and urged to meet at the bar after his shower and rub-down in the locker room. If a number of acquaintances happened to remain for dinner at the club, he likewise stayed, and there was usually a table of bridge or a game of pool.

In this manner he made the acquaintance of Horace Metcalf of the Metcalf Crane Company, to whom later he sold a large order of low phosphorus, and young Peter Van Hoysan of the Van Hoysan family. The latter was a junior member of the great banking house of Van Hoysan & Co., and possessed, Sam considered, a fine, shrewd, clear-thinking mind. He had some

very interesting and stimulating talks with these two men regarding the European situation,—there was no other topic of conversation,—and their opinions went far toward helping him crystallize his own.

Everything he read or heard he instantly weighed in relation to his business. How was this or that going to affect the market? Was iron going up or down? Constantly his thoughts carried him back to this subject.

One night he woke at three o'clock, and knew that sleep had deserted him. His mind began busily to work. Kipps, his secretary, had come down on an early train from the city the day before with a crammed brief-case, and Sam had spent morning and afternoon dictating memorandums and letters. He had been absent from his desk a week; bringing his mind back to his affairs after the interval had stirred him. He decided he would return to the city. Whether or not there was any business to be done, his place during these chaotic times was there, where he could watch events. Paula was going to close the house in a few days, anyway. He had reached this decision the evening before, and now as he lay planning what he should do when he was once more back at his office, thinking out the immediate steps he should take, there began to break over him a light; he caught just a glimpse at first, and then in a moment a clear vision straight into the future. What he saw brought his heart suddenly into his throat.

"Why, of course," he said aloud. "It's *bound* to happen. . . ."

He threw back the covers, and sat up, his teeth shut, his mind racing, and automatically felt about for his slippers with his bare feet. The moon flooded the hummocky sand dunes, the ragged conifers and wind-blown scrub with white silvery light, sharpening shadows. It was as bright as mid-morning, only the world was a-glimmer with soft steely tones instead of golden ones. He went to the window and stared out, his galloping thoughts carrying him on and on. Abruptly he went to the door, opened it, moved quietly down the hall, crept downstairs and prowled about, looking for a newspaper. Underneath one of the wicker tables on the porch he found yesterday's sheet. He turned to the stock market quotations, holding the paper to the moon. He read: "Bethlehem Steel . . . 34⅛."

Carrying the paper back to his room, he returned to bed and studied each quotation carefully. At five o'clock he rose, began to pack his clothes and dress. At six he descended the stairs again, made his way to the garage, and woke Dwiggins. At eight he was speeding toward the city. East Norwich had come and gone before it occurred to him that he had said nothing to Paula about his departure. On a torn leaf from the little red note-book he carried he scribbled a message, gave it to Dwiggins when he reached his office and told him to wire it to her.

§ 8

He proceeded with caution, but with a definite purpose. Every instinct within him told him he was right; his blood tingled with the knowledge of it. He swept Jerry's hesitancy out of the way; he overbore big Harold Webster; he silenced Haussmann. He was determined to buy,—buy iron, buy steel, buy metal, it made little difference what kind. Metal was an integral part of war; the battling armies were using and destroying metal as fast as they could. It was a war of iron and steel against iron and steel, and when the demand came for more the man with iron and steel to deliver was the man who would enrich himself. It was clear, too, that the stocks of the big steel companies were certain to advance in price with increasing calls for their products. He went to Tom Kenyon and told him to buy a hundred shares of Bethlehem steel and left with him a deposit of a thousand dollars. It was his first venture into the stock market since he had forsworn it. Jerry would have nothing to do with his speculating schemes, but he was willing to listen to his advice regarding iron and to buy as much of it as possible while prices were low. Sam convinced him a big boom was on the way.

"Either I'm insane," he kept repeating to Jerry, "or I'm the only man with eyes in my head."

§ 9

It was from Peter Van Hoysan that he first heard about the rolling mill at Crompton Lakes. He met him by accident on a corner of Broadway one day and the two walked a block or so together toward a subway entrance.

"*You're* interested in iron and steel," Peter said; "you ought to go after that Fryberg property. Old Gus Fryberg is dead, and I believe the executors would listen to $25,000 in cash. The family consists of only a wife and daughter and they can't go on with the business. It's a neat affair, and I think worth twice the money. Fryberg was an experimenter, and I'm told he's got a formula for high-speed steel that's sound and cheap. It's a good speculative proposition."

"Why don't *you* buy it?" Sam asked bluntly.

"I know nothing about the steel business. . . . Thought I'd mention it to Shorb."

"Let me look at it first," Sam said. "What's the name?" He penciled it down with a casual air, but his jaw tightened as he wrote.

The Crompton Lakes Steel Company, he found, was a small mill where a moderate quantity of tool steel was manufactured in open pit furnaces having a capacity of eight pots to the furnace; there were two heats a day turning out something in the neighborhood of a ton of metal. The property was well equipped, and almost at a glance Sam saw that there was plenty of room for development. If there should come a sudden demand for steel . . . !

The superintendent and the lawyer who showed him over the plant spoke enthusiastically of Fryberg's formula, which they claimed was the result of fifteen years' work. But this did not interest Sam so much as a surprising large quantity of ferro tungsten he discovered piled in boxes in one of the warehouses. It had been collected for experimental purposes. Ferro tungsten was an integral part in the making of high-speed steel and was selling at about forty-five cents a pound. It was scarce; there were some ten thousand pounds of it here in storage.

Upon his return to New York he went to see Van Hoysan.

"I'll buy the property with you," Peter suggested after listening to him; "we'll each of us put up twelve thousand five hundred."

"No," Sam answered; "I won't do that. You finance me and I'll meet any reasonable rate of interest. You know the property's worth it."

"Well, I won't risk more than fifteen thousand," Peter told him.

Borrowing here, there, everywhere, by devious ways and petty ones, he collected the balance of the money. Matt let

him have five thousand, he sold his Superba for three, the bank at Mappahasset loaned him fifteen hundred on "Merrywold," big Harold Webster gave him five hundred. Paula could have given him the amount he needed and saved him all his trouble. She still had her Government bonds. Hard-driven though he was, he could not bring himself to ask her to accommodate him.

The expected rise in iron prices did not materialize. In December the market was stagnant; the buying orders from abroad on which Sam had counted did not put in an appearance. England and France were purchasing in Sweden; Russia was taking care of herself. But by January there was a noticeable movement in steel. Bethlehem Steel began its phenomenal rise, and Sam promptly commenced pyramiding his orders. On January 26th he bought a hundred shares at 48¾; on February 5th, another hundred at 51¾; on March 23d, more at 69⅛; on April 9th Bethlehem Steel skyrocketed to 100⅝, and later the same day to 110.

It was not until midsummer that the upward movement in iron he had so long anticipated began to make itself evident. In August he sold seventy-five hundred tons from a furnace in the Mahoning Valley district which he and Jerry controlled at an advance of $1.40 per ton over the price prevailing the previous month.

"Now just let's sit tight," he counseled his partner; "hold on as long as we can and watch the market soar."

On May 7th the *Lusitania* was sunk off the Irish coast and on that day Bethlehem Steel Common jumped to a hundred and fifty dollars a share.

§ 10

Paula wanted to take Rubens and the children to visit the Panama Exposition at San Francisco. Sam could ill afford to let her have the money as every dollar he owned was, as he expressed it, "working overtime." She discovered he had mortgaged "Merrywold" without consulting her, and for some reason he could not understand had been very angry with him about it. To placate her, he sold some of his holdings and bade her begone and enjoy herself, but he was annoyed to learn, at the last moment, that she intended to take 'Trude Behlow with her and pay all her expenses. That was Paula all over! She did things in a high-handed fashion and then

took him to task if he dared say "his soul was his own." However, he was glad to have her out of the way. In a hotel, he was much more comfortable; he could go and come as he pleased and did not have to be continually thinking about meal hours. Things were happening in the pig iron business, and happening with a tumultuousness that exceeded even his expectations. Life was thrilling. It was a relief not to be bothered by a wife and family. He felt he had discharged his obligations by giving them the trip to California.

During that same summer Evelyn wrote again begging him to visit her at La Crescenta. "Just a peep Sammy-boy," she pleaded; "surely you can get away from busness long enough to spend a day or two out here and if your wife and the children are going to the Fair why cant you come too and just run down here for a glimpse of the girls and give us a glimpse of you? Its only an overnight trip from San Francisco. . . ."

How get away! The rumor was abroad that he owned ten thousand pounds of ferro tungsten and already he was being approached from various directions about selling all or any part of it. He had paid forty-five cents for it. He moved the decimal point one figure to the right and offered it at four dollars and fifty cents a pound. Jerry told him he was crazy; Peter Van Hoysan shrugged his shoulders and walked away with an expressive gesture of his hands,—sore, Sam decided, because he felt that he, Sam, had "slipped something over on him."

A few weeks later there was brought to him the card of "Monsieur Vasili";—Count Ivan Vasilevich Kemenoff, he learned later to know the gentleman. Monsieur Vasili was a Russian, connected with the Russian Commission who at that time was in the United States buying war materials. Monsieur Vasili was very suave, very diplomatic, charming in manners. He understood, he explained, that "Meester Smee-th" had some quantity of tungsten he was holding for a price. The caller had a suggestion to offer: The Automatic Arms Company had just accepted an order from the Russian Government for forty thousand cases of rifles; in the manufacture of these tungsten was needed, in fact, it must be had immediately as the rifles were to be delivered by a specified date. But no tungsten was in the market,—or very little of it; Monsieur Vasili had canvassed the situation and knew of what he spoke; he was in a position to force the Automatic Arms Company to buy Sam's

tungsten at a price that the gentleman felt certain would be most "satisfying to Meester Smee-th." The Arms Company would pay nine dollars a pound for it, provided "Meester Smee-th" insisted; he would see to it that the time clause in the contract was pressed and that his Government would threaten to cancel the contract at once unless assurance was given it that the rifles would be delivered when stipulated. Very delicately he explained he would expect twenty-five thousand dollars as a token of "Meester Smee-th's" appreciation of the part he proposed to play. It took several weeks before the transaction was consummated, but Sam's net profits at its conclusion were over sixty thousand dollars.

§ 11

When the United States finally entered the war arena, a dozen different activities occupied his attention. He was "long" several hundred shares of Bethlehem Steel, the stock was leaping steadily upward, he was trading in it and other kindred securities constantly. Playing a lone hand, he had turned manufacturer, and from the Crompton Lakes Rolling Mill he was producing, and selling at steadily advancing prices, a fine quality of high-speed steel; the Fryberg formula proved practical, and cheap. He had purchased two other steel plants and had organized the Smith Steel Company. He and Jerry were speculating in pig iron and working the blast furnaces they owned to the limit of their capacities.

Work—stock—percentages—discounts—deals—bargaining—commissions—margins—profits—iron and steel, steel and iron—figuring—figuring—figuring—dollars—money—*riches!*

It was the fulfillment of his life-long dream. Wealth came pouring in upon him from every side.

When he could safely spare his first hundred thousand dollars, he bought a hundred Liberty bonds. A memorable day it was for him when he went to Tom Kenyon's office, received the beautifully engraved green certificates, slipped them into an inside pocket and carried them to his safe deposit box, snapped an elastic around the little bundle and laid it carefully away. A hundred thousand dollars! A hundred thousand dollars! He was worth a hundred thousand dollars! They'd never get that away from him! He might lose every other nickel and penny he possessed, but he'd hang on to those

bonds. Twenty years of grubbing, but at last a hundred thousand dollars! He was so elated that he bought Paula a diamond wrist watch and went into a toy store and selected an expensive gift for each of his children.

And as if the ball once started rolling could not stop, everywhere he turned, every risk he took, every deal he agreed to enter brought him additional wealth. He commenced buying tin plate, contracting for from one to two hundred thousand boxes. Here and there he picked up smaller quantities: twenty-five and fifty thousand boxes, "seconds," "distress lots at seaboard," anything in the shape of tin plate which he could locate. He bought these at five, eight, and twelve dollars a box and sold them at double and often treble the price.

A wireless station was erected by the United States Navy at Mappahasset, and it proved convenient for the Government to purchase "Merrywold" as quarters for the operators. Sam told Paula he would let her build a very much finer, more imposing country home as soon as the war was over.

Money rolled in. It seemed as if everything he touched turned to gold. Luck persistently followed him; the day after he sold stock, the market broke; the day after he bought, it rose. The High Speed Steel Company of North America two months before the Armistice bought his Steel Company, and paid him half a million dollars for the three plants. Going home the night the deal was closed, he picked up a wallet in the street containing over three hundred dollars, and with neither name nor address. Advertisement brought no inquiries.

And as if there were some strange significance attached to it, came tragedy, bringing him even greater wealth! The heart of Phineas Holliday as he was hurrying down Tremont Street in Boston one day suddenly ceased to beat. He staggered a few paces, the paper reported, a passing friend caught him, and a moment or two later he expired. Hard upon this came further grim tidings from distant Manila: Lieutenant Harvey Ballinger and his wife—who had been Miss Mary Holliday of Boston,—both had been stricken down with "flu," and succumbed within one week of each other. Still more shocking and terrible news within the month arrived from France: "Lieutenant Samuel B. Holliday, while leading his platoon in an attack upon an enemy's machine-gun emplacement, was shot through the head and instantly killed. For his gallantry on this occasion, Lieu-

tenant Holliday will be recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor."

Sam hurried to Boston to Narcissa's bedside. He had expected a grief-stricken visage, a crushed and broken woman; but instead he found a countenance illumined by a smile of rare sweetness, and a frail but exalted soul.

"No-o, Sam," she whispered, as he sat beside her, holding her hand, and talking of the time when she would be strong and about once more, "I shall never be well again. There's no future for me,—not in this world. They're waiting for me,—and I am going to them shortly. What would be the use, Sam dear, of my lingering? Don't wish anything so infinitely sad—so terrible—for me. I want to go to my boy and my girl. I haven't seen Mary, you know, for nearly three years and we'll have a lot of things to talk over. Just think, Sam, I should have been a grandmother if she and the baby had lived."

He could not remain long. Business demanded his attention, his affairs could not wait. Twice he made hurried trips to Boston and sat with her for a few hours, and each time he noticed she was frailer, thinner. He could see that her mind was set upon death and by sheer will power she was forcing herself out of life.

On his last visit, she opened her eyes after a silence between them and smiled, a gentle, broad smile of understanding. As he bent closer he was able to catch the faint whisper:

"I'll find out what happened to Nick . . . and about 'Booful Zion,' too."

She died within the fortnight. He had arranged to go to Boston that week-end and was on his way to the train when the telegram was handed to him. He arrived at the shrouded, darkened house within a few hours of her going, but her body had already been removed to the undertaker's.

Even before the funeral he was informed of his inheritance. Through a coincidence in wills and an early holograph testament of Narcissa's in which he was named as the sole legatee of "all I may possess in case anything should happen to me, confident my brother will provide for and look after my children should they ever turn to him for counsel or assistance," he became the sole owner of the great chain of Holliday stores that reached from Atlanta to Bangor, and as far west as Chicago and Kansas City,—a property worth many millions of dollars.

CHAPTER XXVII

§ 1

"It's been wonderful, hasn't it, Sam?—your success I mean."

"I've worked for it. I've never had time for pleasure. I've always stuck pretty close to the job."

"And now you're famous."

"Hardly that."

"Well, you're very well known. I'm always seeing your name and your wife's name in the papers."

"It's only the money," he said deprecatingly.

"But there was your war relief work!"

"I gave 'em a check, that was all."

"I read in the Paris *Herald* the French were going to make you a chevalier of the Legion."

He laughed.

"Not the French. The Russians might if they had anything like that to give away. I *did* contribute something to their famine cause."

"Why, I heard you'd given a hundred thousand to rehabilitation work in France."

"Not so much," he smiled. "There's a good deal of publicity about me I don't deserve."

They were having tea in a hotel lounge room. It was not a luxurious hotel, and the nook in which they sat was secluded, the hour restful and pleasant.

" 'S. Osgood Smith,' " the woman said musingly.

"Oh, that's Paula's idea," Sam hastened to say; "it was after the war; she thought it sounded better." He shrugged slightly. "She had our cards engraved that way. 'Sam Smith' 's plenty good enough for me."

"And for me," his companion added simply.

He touched her hand.

"Dear Ruth," he murmured.

She smiled, looked a moment into his eyes and then dropped her own before his steady regard. She had changed, but there was a good deal of the old Ruth about her still. She had grown faded, gray-haired, was thinner, even smaller. Fifty years old and more he knew her to be, but, in spite of that, real beauty marked her face. It was in her expression rather than her features. She seemed serene, unruffled, at peace with the world. Love, gentleness, and kindliness radiated from her.

"Ruth, you seem to have captured the secret of life," he said, a little stirred.

"Oh," she murmured with a smile and a doubtful head-shake.

"You're happy," he persisted, "and isn't finding happiness the secret of life?"

"Well, I've had my work."

"And you like your work?"

"Oh, very much."

"Teaching religion to savages?"

"Ah, you don't understand."

"Isn't it possible your heathens are better off without knowing anything about Christianity, I mean the Christianity we practice,—the Christianity which permits a world war that costs eleven millions of lives?"

"Our Lord told us to forgive our enemies, to turn the right cheek when the left was smitten."

"Well, you see how closely we follow His precepts!"

"We're a pretty rotten race," Sam went on, after a moment while Ruth frowned in troubled fashion at her folded hands; "I've lost faith in my fellow Christian. I doubt if your savage is very much helped by knowing about the God we worship."

"Anyone is bound to be helped by the Sermon on the Mount, Sam, and being taught to live accordingly. But we teach the poor heathen other things beside religion; we teach them to read and write, we teach them how to care and provide for themselves, we bring them medicine, books, civilization. If you could see what I have seen, and know the satisfaction that I have known, you would have no doubt about the good we do."

Her dark eyes grew warm as she spoke.

He looked at her enviously. She believed in her work, was absorbed in it, lived only to be back in it once more, counting the days until she could return. How glorious to be so deeply interested! How vital all life must seem!

An extraordinary wholesomeness about this little woman.

She woke in Sam good impulses, aroused his better nature, made him want . . . just what was it? . . . something.

And she was to go back; probably he would never see her again. She had given her life to her work in the jungle and she would return to it, there to die. Regret,—sharp and stinging,—came to Sam. Suddenly it seemed so pitiful that she should have to go.

"Ruth, aren't you tired of it? Haven't you had enough? Don't you think you deserve a rest? Isn't there something you could do at home that would keep you from going back to Africa?"

"Oh, Sam, Sam, how little you understand! I love it over there; I love every breath I draw. I love the jungle and the trees and the rains and the little thatched hut which is my home,—and I love my people, Sam, the little boys and girls whom I have taught nearly every single blessed thing they know, who now are men and women, most of them married and with babies. They love me,—you don't know how they love me!—and they need me; I belong to them and they to me, and you ask me whether or not I can find something to do here that will keep me from going back!"

He was silent.

"I gave almost everything Uncle left me," she continued as he remained mute, "to the missionary work of our church. I kept only enough to take care of me when I am old and useless; after I am gone, that will go to the fund as well. . . . I hope when the time comes for me to die, I shall be among my black friends still doing what I can to help them."

"Would you like a contribution from me?" Sam asked.

Her face brightened.

"And you are the man who just said the heathen were better off without the Word of God!"

"I'm not so much interested in bringing them the Word of God as I am in trying to help you,—in doing something for you, yourself."

"For *me?* Oh, I don't need anything, Sam; I have all I want, but I'm sure the Board of Missions would make good use of any gift from you."

He stirred his tea, scowling.

"Well," he said with a long breath, "I'll send them a check and I'll tell 'em it's from you, but I wish . . ."

"What?"

"Oh, that I could do something for you *personally*."

"There's absolutely nothing I want, Sam, unless you could give me a flying carpet that would carry me in a jiffy back where I'd like to be. You're generous; you've always been generous. I remember that as an outstanding characteristic of yours 'way back in the Sixteenth Street days."

"Generosity doesn't make a man happy," he observed dryly.

"But you *are* happy, Sam. Seems to me you have everything a man could possibly want in this life: success, wealth, respect and admiration, a beautiful wife, two lovely children, a magnificent home. What more could you ask?"

"I missed something somewhere," he said heavily. "I don't know just where nor how. I'd like to go back and live my life over again. It would be different," he finished grimly.

"How soon do you expect Paula home?"

"She sails from Naples the end of the month."

"Bringing Sylvia with her?"

"Yes, the child's been with a Miss Shurmann over there, who takes a dozen girls or more to Rome every year, and shows 'em the galleries, the Forum, you know,—all that bunk."

"Oh, not bunk, Sam," Ruth objected.

"Well-l, I don't know whether it does 'em much good."

"And John?"

"John's at college. He's a freshman; just nineteen."

"And what is he going to do? Follow in his father's footsteps?"

Sam shrugged. "No," he said; "he's not cut out for business; his mother wants to make a poet or a musician out of him." He laughed with a jerk of his head. "Guess that's about all he's good for."

"Why, Sam,—how bitterly you talk!"

"Do I? . . . Maybe you're right. But, shucks, I don't know. I don't seem to get much fun out of life. I've made all the money I want; there's no excitement in making any more."

"But you can do so much good with money!" Ruth exclaimed. "Look at all the foundations, the libraries and universities that have been endowed by rich men. Think of all the benefits to the race that these things have meant."

"All very true, and I've given a lot of my money away. I gave a hundred thousand to the Russian relief and I've contributed quite a bit to those overseas charities. I'll give your Board of Missions something sizable, too, but—you know what

I mean, Ruth?—there's no satisfaction in writing your name on the bottom of the check!"

"There are not many men who do that much," Ruth said gently.

"Oh, yes, plenty of them. Most Americans are generous. We like to make money and we like to give it away. There is no satisfaction in holding on to it. I'd be glad to do some good with what I've got."

"But you *do*."

"Well-l, I repeat,—just giving it away doesn't bring any particular thrill. I miss all the fun of spending it. The other fellows do the spending."

"Why don't you take the other fellow's place and have the direction yourself of how it should be spent?"

"I don't know." He glowered at the stump of cigar between his fingers. "How can a man break away?" he went on. "I haven't time to take on any more work. The demands on me are terrific; they never give me any peace. Then again, one gets into a rut. It's ridiculous, of course, but I really wish it were possible to cut loose from everything, go to Africa with you, and get into your work over there."

"Oh, *Sam!* If you only would!"

Their eyes caught again. He thought of the steamer trip, the jungle, the rain, the thatched hut,—Ruth. A sharp flush swept up in him; something in her face, too, quickened with emotion.

"Ah, Ruth. . . ." he said huskily, leaning closer.

Suddenly the picture shattered. His sense of the ridiculous smashed it. Fat Sam Smith,—the well-known S. Osgood Smith,—member of New York clubs, director of corporations, financier,—the husband of *Mrs.* Osgood Smith,—going to Africa as a missionary! Who wouldn't smile at such an idea?

He straightened, recapturing normality, and touched his lips with a fine monogrammed handkerchief.

"Well, we can't do everything we want." He sighed deeply and glanced at his watch.

"I'll have to be going," he said, rising. "When do you sail?"

"Day after to-morrow,—from Hoboken, pier one."

"At noon?"

"Yes, but I shall be there an hour or two earlier."

"I'll come to say good-bye."

"Oh, Sam, you needn't do that. I know how busy you are."

"But I want to." He noted the name of her steamer in the red memorandum book he carried.

"This has been charming, Ruth," he said, taking her hand; "a delightful, happy hour."

"I've enjoyed it, too."

For a last time their eyes met and clung together, then Sam bent over her hand, pressed the fingers gently, turned and sturdily walked away.

§ 2

In the street, under the heavy glass canopy above the hotel entrance, he was obliged to wait. Dwiggins, with the car, was nowhere in sight. A thundering downpour of rain deluged the street, the water fountaining in sprays as the hurtling drops hit the hard pavements.

"Taxi, sir?" suggested the doorman.

"No," Sam growled between his teeth. "I want my own car. Where the devil did he go?"

"Sorry, sir; couldn't say."

"Well—damn it . . ." Sam was scowling. In some way he wished he might find the doorman to blame. At that moment his limousine turned into the street and rolled smoothly up to where he stood. Sam glared at Dwiggins as the car stopped.

"Where were you?"

"Had a flat, Mr. Smith, and I just ran round to a garage up the street here a bit."

"You make it your business in future to look over your tires before you take the car out. I'm not accustomed to be kept waiting."

Sam saw the man redden under his coppery skin. It satisfied him; Dwiggins was getting altogether too independent. He had been driving him now for twelve years, and he imagined, his employer suspected, that he had a strangle-hold on his job. The sharp reprimand perhaps might do him good.

He was told now to drive to a very well-known fruiterer on Fifth Avenue. There Sam selected the largest basket of fruit on display and left directions that the following day it be sent to Ruth's steamer; at a florist's across the way he ordered

fifty dollars' worth of roses, and at a retail publisher's near by, he said to the clerk who took his order:

"Pick out any twelve books you think a lady would like to read on an ocean voyage; make the selection yourself."

He left his card to be delivered with the volumes.

It was still raining when he came out again into the Avenue. Where should he go now? He thought over the possibilities.

He decided on his club. As usual, the place at that hour was dismal and deserted. Old Trisco with his black skullcap awry upon his bald head sat in his customary chair by the window, the newspaper he was deciphering, word by word, hardly more than four inches from his thickly spectacled eyes. Keating, the architect, and a companion stood by another window watching the rain-soaked crowds and vehicles that jammed the street. Sam nodded to Keating, crossed the room to the reading table, and as he approached it, a man rose hastily from one of the deep leather chairs close by, to brush past him. He turned to look and saw it was Peter Van Hoysan.

"Weisbaum was telling me you're building a very beautiful house at Sands Point, Mr. Smith," said Keating, coming up.

Sam gave his questioner a casual glance, as his hands sorted the stack of evening papers.

"Yes," he said indifferently, "it's going to be very satisfactory, I imagine."

"How soon do you expect it will be finished?"

Sam shrugged.

"He's been at it two years; at the rate he's going it will probably take him as long again."

"Really?"

"He *says* occupancy this summer."

"I'd like to get some photographs of it for the *Architectural Guide* as soon as it's far enough along,—if I may."

"See Weisbaum."

"Yes, sir." Keating withdrew.

There was nothing in the paper, and after glancing at the headlines for a minute or two Sam tossed it aside. This twaddle about not insisting the European nations pay their war debts made him sick; of course they were going to pay,—every last one of them—and if they balked, there were enough red-blooded husky men in the country to go over and *make* 'em!

He went up to the card room, but there was only the smell of stale cigar smoke there. The library was deserted except for a bald head that regularly emitted a nasal snuffle. In the elevator he encountered young Jim Thompson and Stanley Opp.

"Terrible day, isn't it, Mr. Smith? Raining like the devil; it just poured down about five o'clock."

"Don't mind the rain, do you, Mr. Smith? I say New York's a place where the weather doesn't make much difference. There is always a taxi or the subway . . . but guess you don't see the subway often." A nervous laugh.

"What you boys doing?" Sam inquired. "Bridge or chasing a drink?" He had in mind inviting them downstairs to his private locker.

"Oh, we have a handball match on. They just telephoned up the court's free. You don't play handball, do you, Mr. Smith? Guess you're too . . . too . . ."

"Not *old*, Stanley," Sam finished with a grin for the young man. The boy colored.

"No, sir; I wasn't going to say that at all. I was trying to say too busy."

"A good out," thought Sam, leaving the car on the ground floor, "but he started to say 'too old.' "

He stared at himself in the hall mirror. Gray, trig, stocky, and grim, that was how he would have described himself. He had lost very little of his hair; it had receded a trifle, but he rather liked the consequent heightening of his forehead. His hair was more silvery white than gray. He was proud of its quantity and silkiness. His skin, too, had a healthy appearance. It had always been smooth and it still remained unblemished. He was wrinkled about the eyes, of course, flabby pockets hung beneath each socket, and there was a firm jowl on either jaw, but these signs of age did not distress him. He was proud of his clean-shaven fresh complexion, the unfaded light in his eye, the vigorous set of his jaw. These were as they should be. He worked for his appearance; Theodore, his valet, knew what pains he took. But his paunch humiliated him. Try as he would,—diet and exercise,—he could not reduce it. It stuck out in front like a fat round tub. Only Theodore was aware of the elastic girdle he wore that sometimes was laced too tightly and galled him. But in spite of his girth, he felt he presented the figure of a well-set-up, well-

groomed man, sleek and trim, one who still trod with a brisk, purposeful step.

"Not old, Mr. Opp," he murmured to his image in the mirror; "not old, but perhaps too ungainly and fat."

Old? Why, Lord Almighty, he wasn't *sixty* yet! Sixty? . . . There were a good twenty,—a good *thirty* years ahead of him!

He went out into the dripping rain, and this thought pursued him as he climbed into his automobile, and as Dwiggins began to maneuver the car into the stream of laggardly moving traffic which would eventually permit him to reach the Park Avenue apartment.

Old? . . . Wwwwww-hy,—he wasn't *sixty* yet!

Who wanted to play handball? Not he. He wouldn't be caught at the foolish game, not if he were eighteen. Some men played another silly thing called "squash"! Such forms of exercise did not appeal to him. Physical exertion had nothing to do with age, anyhow. It was only the way a man felt inside that determined whether or not he was old. Youthful enthusiasms! That was it. The capacity to enjoy oneself,—have a good time. His mind considered frivolity. To-night he would be frivolous: wine, women, and song. He'd prove to Mr. Stanley Opp,—or rather to himself,—that he was very far indeed from being *old!*

How best to go about his night of revel? The hotels?—restaurants? Deadly. The theater? A bore. He had to be careful how he proceeded; he was too easily identified. Allowing some cute little flapper to shake him down by kidding him that she really liked him was too dangerous a game. No—no—no; not for Mr. S. Osgood Smith. And he didn't propose to get his name into the papers, either,—although in case there was ever any danger of that, he had little doubt that he could fix the press. But he must proceed cautiously. His own apartment was always the safest place for a party, but to-night he fancied another environment.

Ritter! He thought of Ritter. Ritter had given quite a jazzy affair at the Waldorf last year, but Ritter's drinking and jazzing days were over. Locomotor ataxia had him now; he couldn't control the action of his knees any more, so he spent most of his days and nights on his back. Poor old Ritter. A good fellow, and a damn successful attorney, probably the smartest and cleverest lawyer in the country. He had saved

Sam many a dollar, but then, he had been well paid for it. Ritter always looked out for Number One; his fees were enormous; it was common talk that some of them ran over six figures. But Sam had never given him a chance to sting him. Ritter had been on his pay-roll for twenty-five thousand a year for nearly ten years. He attended to all Sam's legal business, and he had handled it always with damn fine skill. It had been he who had put through the deal by which the Elmore people had taken over the great string of Holliday stores. That very morning Sam had happened to notice that Elmore stock was quoted at 83. His holdings,—common and preferred,—brought him in over half a million a year. Clever old Ritter! He had fixed it so that he, Sam, got most of the profits and had none of the worry. One of these days he would have to go 'round and see Ritter.

Ritter brought Taylor Evans to mind. Sam's hand gently smote his knee. Taylor was just the man who would know how to stir up something for the evening. He hadn't seen Taylor for months, and it would be fun getting together with him.

As soon as he reached his apartment, he looked up Taylor's private number in his vest-pocket memorandum book and told Theodore to ring him up. A moment or two later he heard Taylor's drawling accents over the telephone.

"Sure, come on over. I'll be mighty glad to see you. All afternoon I've been down in Belknap's studio, two stories below my own, having my portrait painted, and there's been half-a-dozen newspaper camera men there snapping us,—him at work, me posing for him. It's a publicity stunt. He'll be delighted to stage some kind of a show for us. He's got some excellent Bicardi, and he knows every model and chorus girl in the city. It will tickle him to death to have me bring you 'round, only he'll want you to sit for him."

"Well, I might do that some day. What does he charge for a portrait?"

"Five thousand, but of you he'll probably ask ten."

"We might compromise on thirty-five hundred," Sam laughed. "Anyway, I'm coming. Somebody accused me today of being too old to have a good time. I want to find out."

"I'm in want of some relaxation myself. After posing for four hours straight, a man needs something. I'll 'phone Belknap you're coming over."

§ 3

At half past twelve the same evening, Sam adjusted the white silk muffler about his neck, and with Belknap's assisting hand hunched himself into his heavy fur-lined overcoat, picked up hat, gloves, and cane, shook hands with his host, waved over his shoulder to Taylor and the rest of the company, and took himself home. Dwiggins was waiting below, but it had stopped raining and through the breaking clouds there were glimpses of stars. Sam decided to walk.

The evening had been a failure, and the only chance of saving it for the others was to eliminate himself from their midst. That had become clearer and clearer to him as the night advanced. Mr. S. Osgood Smith, white of head, sleek, and well-groomed, had sat amongst them and every one present had been conscious of the fact. He caught them eyeing him covertly, and whispering about him out of the corners of their mouths. He would have given a great deal to have heard what was said. Why did the mere fact of his wealth set him apart in this group? He was no different from Taylor or Belknap; they were men approximately his own age, Taylor a little older, Belknap perhaps a year or two younger. But one and all insisted upon treating him as if he were some kind of a king or god. They wouldn't accept him nor make him one of themselves.

He had joined Taylor a little after eight o'clock and together they had descended at once to Belknap's studio, a magnificent room of fine proportions with a huge window of many panes facing north. Curtains,—soft yellow silk inside ones and long heavy velvet outside ones,—screened the narrow frames of prismed glass. There was a black shining piano, half spread with an old medieval cope of beautiful colors and embroidery, a throne for models, carved Italian furniture, some French war lithographs, and a large case in which Belknap kept the pastels for which he was famed. Belknap, himself, Sam found to be a big man with thin waving gray hair, a strong mouth and chin, a heavy nose, and fine eyes,—a handsome man, the actor type, one with whom women fell easily in love.

The early part of the evening had gone rather pleasantly. They had had a cocktail or two, had discussed Taylor's half-finished portrait upon the easel, and presently had debated the

place for dinner. Belknap's and Taylor's club, which was close by on Forty-fourth Street, had been their choice, and here they argued over their food and Sam was introduced to one or two prominent actors. The club's membership was largely confined to that profession. Then back again to the studio, and shortly afterwards the guests of the evening began to filter in. Trays of sandwiches and eatables had appeared, there had been plenty of drinks on hand for refreshment, but a pall had hung over the proceedings. There had developed no spontaneity, no frivolity. The pretty little models huddled together upon a divan in a corner, and murmured among themselves, or exchanged whispers with Taylor and their host; a novelist, Faustina Crews, with a great mop of marceled hair, had smoked cigarette after cigarette, eyeing the others under drooping lids; a pianist had played, an actress from the comic opera stage had sung a song and drawn mild applause. Toward twelve o'clock other actresses with their escorts had arrived, and Sam had been introduced to beautiful little Olive Owens of the Follies. And then nothing had happened. He had sat stiffly in a high-backed armchair and watched the scene. The company had been introduced one by one as they had arrived. "Mr. Blaaa, Miss Blaaa,—Mr. *Osgood* Smith; Mrs. Blaaa,—Mr. *Osgood* Smith." Always a faint stress upon the "Osgood." He had risen each time and bowed, and the new acquaintances at once drifted away. He had sat on alone. He had wanted to unbend; he couldn't. He had striven to say something inconsequential, something amusing; habitual reserve,—the cultivation of years,—held him fast. Sitting there, he had a mental picture of himself: stiff and grim, and suddenly it came to him he was spoiling the fun and that there was not a person in the room who did not earnestly wish he would go home. Early in the evening he had been afraid that some chorus girl or artist's model might try to caress him, crawl into his lap, pretend an affection in the hope of a bill, or perhaps, later on, a check from him! Ah, he thought as he plodded homeward, if only one of them had tried to do so, she could have had anything she wanted! Only not to be thought a block of wood, not to be treated like a machine. He was *not* too old to enjoy life; rather it was as if a wall about him shut life out. Of merry-making, of nonsense, of revelry, he still knew himself to be capable. From his life insurance tests, he was aware exactly what was his blood pressure, his general physical condition,

and he knew he was still rated as a young man. What mattered it if Stanley Opp thought him old! It was not fair to judge a man merely because his hair had turned white.

§ 4

At eight the next morning, Theodore came softly into the room and slowly raised the shade. This was the way Sam preferred to be awakened. He disliked anything sudden or startling, and the gradual brightening of the light in the room was a pleasant way of being gently urged to consciousness. The valet held his warmed wrapper for him, his slippers were by his bed. The man shaved him first, and Sam frequently was able to catch a few more winks of sleep under the soothing touch of the valet's hands as he massaged his face afterwards. His shower came next, and when he returned to the bedroom, his clothes for the day were carefully laid out. At quarter to nine he descended to breakfast. The apartment he and Paula had occupied on Park Avenue for five years was a duplex, consisting of twelve rooms for which he paid fifteen thousand a year. His grapefruit was waiting for him, and presently the butler brought him his coffee, saccharine, and dry bran toast. At nine he went down in the elevator to the street and Dwiggins drove him to his office.

This was his undeviating programme, month in and month out, but to-day a strong distaste for it came to him. He hated the thought of the dark orderliness of his oak-ceiled office, the glimmer of the polished sheet of glass that covered the great oak desk, the bronze ink-well with its knight's head ornament, the green light glowing like a piece of luminous jade over its center, the *Wall Street Journal* neatly folded at one side. Nothing else. No one would disturb him until he rang. The paper or his thoughts might engage him without fear of interruption. When ready his finger would touch a mother-of-pearl button and Kipps would come obsequiously in, his hands, as always, clasped discreetly before him, the usual rosebud or carnation in his button-hole.

"What's up to-day, Kipps?" Sam knew he would ask and with equal certainty he was sure the secretary would answer: "Nothing of importance, sir." He would say that if a cave-in

in one of the mines had occurred, or the docks at Mesabi had burned.

Next, Kipps would bring him his letters and memorandums. Several of the last were from Jerry. Smith & Haines, one time dealers in pig iron, had grown to swollen proportions in the past six years. They now owned a number of mines near Hibbing in Minnesota, a railroad which they had built and operated themselves, a great string of docks at Mesabi, a fleet of ninety ore vessels that operated between Duluth and Buffalo, a four-furnace plant at Susquehanna which had a capacity of producing sixteen hundred tons of pig iron per day. In addition, there were the blast furnaces at Pittsburgh and at Youngstown, Ohio, fed principally from the mines at Chattanooga and Birmingham. Smith & Haines had branch offices in nine cities, but their affairs now occupied only a small part of the senior partner's attention. Jerry managed the business and did it very well. There were twenty other activities in which Sam was interested: the high tension electrical switch company he had backed, a patented machine for darning stockings in which he had invested and which had proved a tremendous success; his newspaper in Washington, his stock in O'Neil, Westly & Co. He was chairman of the board that had re-financed the Falcon Clock Company, and also of the board that controlled and managed the Columbia Steamship Company, a director in half a score of lesser corporations, and was treasurer of the Nassau County Improvement Association and also of the New York Electric School Society. A dozen small enterprises he had financially launched, in the theory that one of them might turn out a success—as the darning machine had done,—and offset his losses, but there had never been any losses. It was said in the Street that if S. Osgood Smith backed a scheme it was certain to "go over."

§ 5

The day began as he had foreseen. There were the usual tabulated reports, the usual figures in red ink, the usual list of appointments for morning and afternoon, the usual appeals for contributions. Kipps handed them to him neatly clipped together. Sam flipped over the various sheets, glanced at one

or two of them, his brow puckered, as he tossed them back on the desk with an impatient gesture.

"I suppose I'm doomed to do this sort of thing for the rest of my life."

He rose to his feet and walked to the window. Kipps respectfully stood.

"Oh, for God's sake, sit down!" Sam flung at him.

He stared out at the grim dirty piles of masonry and steel that reared themselves up one upon another, block on block, beneath his eye. Every stone there was a monument to some man's toil,—a grave-stone to mark the tomb of something in life that man had missed. At sixty could such a man shake off the ties that bound him to his station in life,—break them, smash them, tear them loose? He, Sam, had no desire to be a director, nor a chairman of a board, nor to shoulder responsibility, which meant only more money for him. He already had more money than he knew what to do with. Many years ago Baldwin Wright had once read aloud *Gulliver's Travels* and there had been in the book a colored picture of Gulliver flat on his back pinioned down by a network of cords. Sam saw himself such a prostrate giant. Wasn't it possible with a supreme effort to wrench loose? Wasn't it possible that an iron will could break away? . . . But once free, what then? How go on? How live? How find an interest? How exist without something vital to substitute for these petty concerns which brought him no satisfaction, only money? . . . What was there? . . . He thought of Ruth and the thatch-covered hut in Africa. . . . No, that was too absurd.

He walked back to his desk, sank heavily into his chair, automatically picked up the clipped correspondence and memorandums once more, again tossed them from him with distaste. Kipps made neither sound nor move, waiting patiently upon his employer's mood.

"What's up to-day, Kipps?" Sam asked presently with a sigh.

"Nothing of importance, sir. Doctor Jennings is anxious to learn your decision regarding St. Andrew's,—that's all."

"St. Andrew's what?"

"St. Andrew's College, sir."

"Ah, yes, I remember. How much does he want?"

"He's asking for fifty thousand. He's trying to raise ten million, you'll recall."

Sam scowled.

"Can't we give it to him?"

"Why, certainly, sir. I think you can afford to let him have the fifty thousand if you think the charity deserving."

"Doctor Jennings used to be superintendent of a Sunday-school I once attended. He entered the ministry since. He must be a very old man."

"Yes, sir."

"What's Elmore quoted at to-day?"

"Yesterday at eighty-one and one-half."

"Suppose I presented him with the common I own."

"The common, sir?"

"Yes, the common stock I own."

"All of it?"

"Yes, certainly. It's over a hundred thousand shares. That would about give him his ten million."

"Mr. Smith!"

"Didn't you say he wanted ten million?"

"But, Mr. Smith!"

"Oh, cut out the heroics, Kipps. We'd never miss it."

"Well, it would indeed be laudable; it would be *most* generous."

Sam sat moodily in his chair, elbows on either arm, his short stubby fingers linked. He was thinking again of Ruth; he would see her on the morrow at the steamer; she would remember old Jennings; it would please her to hear of the gift he contemplated making.

"I tell you, Kipps, give that fifty thousand we had ticketed for Jennings to the Board of Foreign Missions, and I'll see Mr. Ritter about disposing of the Elmore stock. I'll still have the preferred."

"Yes, sir. But Mr. Smith . . ."

Sam turned a cold eye upon the dapper middle-aged man before him and the remonstrance died unuttered upon his lips.

"As for those," Sam said after a moment, pointing at the clipped memorandums and correspondence, "take care of them yourself. I won't be bothered. . . . I'm not going to be bothered any more."

"Yes, sir." The secretary rose.

"There was just one letter of a personal nature." The man hesitated. "I opened it, as the handwriting was unfamiliar."

"Answer it yourself."

"I'm afraid, sir. . . ."

"Well, what the devil is it, Kipps? Don't stand there like a mummy."

"It's about that lady in California, sir,—the one at La Crescenta." He offered a letter of several closely written sheets. Sam took them and began to read.

DEAR MR. SMITH,—

I am writing this on my own responsibility. Evelyn does not know it, and I fear she would not countenance it, if she did. At the risk of meriting her displeasure and yours, I address you, nevertheless, in order to acquaint you with the fact that my dear friend is not well, and—though it wrings my heart to pen the words,—not very far from her end! As you know, Evelyn and I have made our home together for many years, and in all that time no cross or impatient word has ever passed between us or have we had a single misunderstanding. She has given her life to me and to mine, and I owe all my happiness to her. My girls, one of whom is married now, and has given me a granddaughter, share with me these feelings of gratitude and affection to her who has spent all her days in sacrifice and service for us.

As you well know, Mr. Smith, Evelyn has always hoped that some day you would visit her here. Her health, her weak lungs, have not permitted her to go to New York, although she had sometimes discussed the possibility with me. She still cherishes the hope that the time will come when it will be possible for you to arrange your affairs so that you can make the transcontinental trip.

During the past six months it has become more and more obvious to us all that she is not as strong as she has been. Neither she nor I is any longer young. My daughters provide all the care and comfort that two lorn old women could possibly want. We have servants to wait upon us and every need and wish is gratified. I mention these things as I desire,—and I am sure Evelyn would desire,—that you should know we want for nothing. But the time is drawing short. Evelyn may live for many years, and indeed may even outlive me, but it is a fact which none of us can longer conceal from ourselves, that she is fading and no longer has the strength of a few months ago. When my own hour comes, I should not be able to close my eyes in final resignation, knowing that while there yet was time, I made no effort to convey to you the circumstances, and to ask you, if you cherish still a lingering regard for her, to make whatever personal sacrifice may be necessary, and see her once more before it is too late.

With confidence in your understanding and with the earnest hope that you will find it possible to come soon to California, I remain very sincerely and respectfully, Evelyn's friend,

ELSIE HARRIS.

For a long time Sam sat staring at the pages in his hand. He read the letter again, certain parts of it several times. When he looked up, Kipps had left the room. He rang.

"To-morrow night I take the Lake Shore Limited for Chicago, and the following day the Santa Fe out of Chicago for Los Angeles. Get me a drawing-room or compartment on both trains. I shall go alone."

"But Mr. Smith, the Falcon meeting is Friday noon and there is the Iron Dealers' Annual Convention dinner on Saturday——"

"I'll not be here for either."

"But Mr. Smith, you're the guest of honor Saturday——"

"Well, the guest of honor won't be there. They can find somebody else. Get Mr. Haines. Tell 'em I'm sick, or anything you damn please. And cancel my engagements for to-day and to-morrow. I won't be back."

He snatched up his coat, hat and cane, jerked open the hall door, and strode out of the office.

CHAPTER XXVIII

§ 1

The sun lay warm and beguiling upon the mansard roof, the walls and gardens of "Merrywold." Paula liked the name and had christened the new place at Sands Point after the old one at Mappahasset. The house sat back a hundred yards or more from the water's edge, and was finely proportioned, stately, and generous, with two wings built at oblique angles like arms extended in affectionate embrace. On the side facing the water the stone archway of the center doorway gave upon an expansive balustraded terrace of flagstones ingeniously set so as to permit a tiny edging of grass to sprout between the cracks that separated them. Broad stone steps led down to a sweep of lawn flanked by curving borders of flowering shrubs which appeared to kneel at the feet of sheltering ranks of conifers, elms, and maples. In front of the shrubs and skirting the lawn were clusters of calceolaria, pansies, snap-dragons, dwarf asters, and daisies. Twenty feet from the narrow strip of sandy beach, which the lawn suddenly dipped to meet, a wall of jagged rocks protecting the grass from encroaching waves and high tides. A short flight of steps here led down to the bath-house and the private dock that reached out like a long finger to the boat house and the float, to which was tied a rowboat that gently tilted and nodded with the easy ripple which came lazily toward the shore. Sylvia's and John's canoes side by side lay upon the float. Beyond, moored to its buoy, rode easily *The White Cap,* the Osgood Smiths' luxurious power boat.

Much had been accomplished in the two years since Weisbaum had turned the completed house over to his client. Upon Sam's return from Europe, he had walked with the architect through the empty echoing halls and rooms, smelling fragrantly of new wood and turpentine, had circled the house outside, and had been conscious only of disappointment. It

was all so unfinished, so garish, so raw, so brand-new. Bricks, mortar troughs, lumber, scaffolding, dusty bags of cement lay scattered about; the window-panes still bore the white calcimine daubing of the builders, the new-made lawn was spongy and scraggly looking.

"Give us time, Mr. Smith," Weisbaum had protested; "the house itself has only just been completed. We didn't want to go ahead with the garden until you and Mrs. Smith returned and we had a chance to consult your wishes. It's the house at the moment; does it please you?"

Yes, the house was all right; in fact it satisfied its owner's every wish. It was spacious, beautiful, imposing. Sam liked its height and gracious sweep. But its newness, its ugly unkempt surroundings distressed him. He had promptly relieved Weisbaum of the garden, and taken it in hand himself; Paula was to deal with the decorators and decide on the furnishings; he proposed to make the laying out of the grounds his own affair. He had no intention, moreover, of dallying about it; it had to be accomplished at once; he declined to wait on either man or Nature. At once he had engaged a noted landscape architect, and had told him to spare no expense in rushing the work. Whatever he proposed doing, had to be done in the minimum of time.

"Hang the expense," Sam had said, "the point is to get the place in shape."

It pleased him mightily the next time he visited the new home, to observe an army of men, grading, digging and hauling. Trucks loaded with full-grown trees had appeared to be arriving every few minutes. Like magic, rhododendrons, peonies, and hydrangeas leaped to life in the flower-beds, and began to put forth their delicate blooms in the new surroundings. The gravel walks took shape, trellises covered with ramblers sprang into being, borders of mignonette, forget-me-nots, and heliotrope burst from the ground in flowering profusion as if the soil had been touched with fairy wands. By the following summer the garden appeared to be a decade old; the vistas through the trees seemed pictures that had delighted human eyes for half a generation; the smooth, close-cropped lawn looked like a sward of years' maturity. Some miles distant an old flour mill dating from Revolutionary days had been discovered, its walls crumbling but covered by a magnificent vine of ivy. At the landscape architect's sugges-

tion, Sam bought the mill, and a fortnight later had the pleasure of seeing the luxurious creeper gracing the southeast wing of his own abode. It had been a Herculean task, the architect admitted, but the effect was superb. The ivy looked as if it had struck root in that spot a hundred years ago.

§ 2

On this particular summer morning Sam was thinking with satisfaction of how much had been accomplished, as he came out on the flagged terrace and let his eyes drift over the beauty of the prospect that spread itself from beneath his feet, dropping gradually to the water's edge, the dancing wave rips beyond glinting in golden sunshine. The work while it had been in progress had amused him; now that it was all completed, he had lost interest; there was nothing further to be done. He strolled to the edge of the steps and looked critically at the stretch of lawn and its bordering loveliness. Bees zummed in the flowering hawthorn, the snip of the gardener's shears sounded rhythmically from an unseen corner, a boy was gathering fallen rose petals in a flower-bed. Only one unsightly note marred the orderliness of the vista: Sylvia or John, or perhaps one of their inconsiderate young guests, had left the croquet mallets and balls in a scattered heap on the lawn.

He did not feel particularly well this morning; his cup of black coffee, which with one slice of very dry toast was all that he permitted himself for breakfast, again had disagreed with him. A dull hot pain burned his stomach. He supposed he would have to go back to drinking tea, which he hated. Another annoyance had been the tale the scales had told him. By exercise and diet he had succeeded since the first of the year in reducing by fifteen pounds. Some of these had crept back. The cocktails which he had permitted himself of late no doubt were responsible. Either he would have to give up alcohol entirely or stop worrying about his girth. He gave a casual look down at himself now, noted his spotless white shoes, his immaculate flannel trousers, his silk shirt, and the pleated gaberdine sport coat he wore that buttoned with a single button at the belt. Portly he might be, but he knew he still appeared vigorous. Smooth of face, white-haired, his

eye was keen under his overhanging brows,—the hairs of which Theodore blackened each morning with a little brush dipped in a French preparation,—his step was firm, he carried himself erect. Sixty, perhaps, but a hale and hearty sixty. S. Osgood Smith. There came to him the memory of himself as a shock-headed boy of fourteen with a brimming milk pail resting on the ground on either side of him, looking out across the fields and stone fences of his father's farm, and wanting to run madly through the new grass, to leap barriers and plunge into the pool of Miller's Creek. He remembered the longing that had tugged at his heart at that moment, the longing to be free and to do as he pleased, and then the call to work that had summoned him from his dreaming. Well, his whole life had been that: answering the call to work. And he had achieved; the mansion at his back, the lovely vista at his feet, *The White Cap* riding at her buoy,—these were evidences of his industry. Nor could it be said that he had not done a great deal of good with his money. He had been generous, philanthropic; he had subscribed liberally to famine and rehabilitation funds, to missionary work, and he had endowed a college which was now to bear his name. "Osgood Smith College" it was to be called. There had been some newspaper criticism because he had changed its moribund name of "St. Andrew's" to his own, but in view of his great gift he considered that only his due. Doctor Jennings, himself, had proposed it. A philanthropist deserved some lasting monument to his generosity. One needed but to be reminded of the Carnegie Libraries and the Rockefeller Foundation.

He felt in his pocket for a cigar but, after he had put it between his lips, he returned it. Somehow the thought of the smoke repelled him. He'd wait until after lunch, and then he remembered that Paula was to have a number of ladies into lunch,—patronesses of some dance or Junior League affair to which she was anxious to have Sylvia invited. He would have to lunch alone upstairs in his library or go to the Golf Club. The food at the Club always stood on a steam-table from a half to a full hour before it was served; it was unpalatable and never failed to give him indigestion. His brows puckered and he made a wry face of distaste.

Slowly descending the broad stone steps to the fine gravel path at their foot he came upon a fawning dog, a mangy, disheveled creature, that came crouching toward him, belly

to the ground, wagging its bedraggled tail. The animal was obviously a stray cur and its ragged, patchy hair was foul with the dirt in which it had rolled. Conscious of his white shoes and trousers, Sam beat a retreat, calling to the creature to be off, but the dog mistook his words and actions for play, and came groveling and wriggling nearer and nearer. To prevent a leap and the dirty paws, Sam kicked him, but not before a long streak of filth had marked one trouser leg. The man swore and kicked the dog again with a vigorous thrust of his foot. Instead of taking flight, the sorry creature at once rolled over on its back, its paws curled against its belly, its tail between its legs, cowering.

"Get out of here," shouted Sam; "be off with you."

But the cur only rolled supinely upon the ground, fluttering the tip of its close-hugged tail. The abjectness of the beast inflamed the man's temper. He looked about for a stick; none within reach, he picked up a handful of pebbles from the gravel walk and flung them at the disgusting animal, shouting at him to be off, prodding him sharply with his toe. But the dog only wallowed more miserably upon its back. With teeth suddenly clenched, Sam wrenched a garden stick from one of the flower-beds and approached threateningly. The dog fluttered its eyes before the expected blow, but made no other move. Sam struck him sharply without effect, and then struck him again. The wretched creature only continued to cringe. A third time the stick was raised but something stayed Sam's arm. The gardener's boy, with rose petals crushed in his hand, was regarding him fixedly.

With an oath, Sam flung the stick from him, dusting his hands.

"Come here, you," he ordered the boy; "take this damned animal out of here and see he doesn't come back."

The boy gathered the dog in his arms.

"Here." Sam turned back. A jingle in his pocket, and he drew out half-a-dollar which he tossed at the boy's feet.

He waited for no acknowledgment but strode hastily away, glancing with a scowl at the black streak on his trouser leg.

Making the circuit of the garden, following the gravel path beneath the bordering rows of elms and maples, presently he encountered Blythe, engineer and skipper of *The White Cap*. The man touched his visored cap respectfully.

"Any chance of going out to-day, sir?"

"Not for me. Mrs. Smith may have some orders for you; she has guests this afternoon. She'll probably send you word."

"It's been some time since we've had *you* aboard, sir,—if I may say so."

"Oh, well," Sam scowled; "I don't enjoy the water."

"Too bad, sir; *The White Cap* is a staunch little boat. I could take her to Florida any time, and if I could pack enough fuel, I wouldn't hesitate to go straight across. That cruiser type makes a splendid seaworthy boat. I'd trust myself in her anywhere."

Sam nodded and turned his back. The man's words annoyed him. There was evidently an implied criticism in them. It was true that he had not been aboard the boat since he had gone over to the opening day of the Larchmont Yacht Club, but—it was *his* boat and he was under no obligation to set foot on it from one end of the year to the other if he didn't feel like it. Blythe was too damned officious with his advice and suggestions. His duty was to run the boat—and mind his business.

Back once more at the house, Sam mounted the steps and sank into one of the comfortable wicker armchairs. The sun beat gratefully on his neck and shoulders. He remained inertly so for some time, but when one of the maids crossed the terrace he roused himself.

"Where's the rest of the family this morning?" he demanded.

"Miss Sylvia, I think, went to the Club, sir, and Mr. John, too. They left quite early this morning. Mrs. Smith is still in her room. I believe Miss Powell is with her."

"Who's Miss Powell?"

"The secretary, sir."

"Ah, yes."

"Shall I tell Mrs. Smith you're inquiring for her, sir?"

"No-no. . . . Don't disturb her. . . . Bring me the paper."

He found nothing in the news. The sun struck obliquely on the sheet before his eyes but he was too lazy to move. Automatically he glanced at the stock market reports and then tossed the paper from him. He frowned sleepily, reached for a cigar again, and again returned it to his pocket in distaste. Presently he straightened and made a long arm for the newspaper, turning this time to the radio announcements for the day. There was hardly anything of interest in the morning program: The Kiddie Klub,—Bible reading,—Uncle Geebee,—

Radio Warblers. The Warblers might be worth listening to, but they would not come on until one-thirty.

§ 3

He fell to musing. Blythe had suggested taking *The White Cap* to Florida. That might be something to do next winter; it was too hot down there, now. Of course, going by sea was not to be thought of; he had no desire to be tossed about in a small boat for three or four days. He might, however, send *The White Cap* down in Blythe's charge, and meet it there, but Palm Beach offered him little. There'd be Bradley's and jazz and hotel-cooked food that would give him indigestion, and a lot of smuggled liquor. Recollections of the last voyage he had taken down the Coast came to him—the "hundred golden hours at sea,"—the trip he had been making when war was declared. He was upon his way to inspect a furnace at Birmingham, and he remembered it had been part of his plan to run out to Los Angeles immediately afterwards, to see Evelyn. If he had only gone then! If only he had carried out his intention! Two years ago, when suddenly he had decided to postpone the visit no longer, he had arrived too late!

Memories came whirling back upon him: the day his car had carried him from his Los Angeles hotel and, after his various inquiries, had brought him to the little house at La Crescenta. A strange woman had opened the door for him,—a woman gray-haired and wrinkled who had gazed at him from sad and sunken eyes. Then he had asked for Evelyn, and his question had found its answer in the silence that met it. Evelyn had died only three days before, the day after he had left New York, and the little rooms still smelled of the funeral flowers. He went in and sat down and for an hour or more talked with Elsie Harris of their friend. Then sadly he climbed back into the waiting automobile which looked so huge and incongruous standing in the rutted road before the tiny house which was banked with rows of marigolds and nasturtiums of which she had once written him so happily.

Evelyn,—a life remade, a life at the moment of its dissolution that had been snatched back from the grave to find its fulfillment in love and service. How often he had wondered

about her since that day, wondered what, during the last few years of her life, she had thought of him, wondered what recollection of him had been hers in the last few moments of consciousness vouchsafed her. He had stirred uncomfortably as Elsie Harris, with tears that drenched her face, spoke of her.

"She loved you, Mr. Smith," the little wrinkled woman said, "she loved you to the end. You were to her, her god, her savior. Often she has said to me that she owed you everything,—her life, and what,—please God,—was her soul. Evelyn was the truest, the best woman I've ever known. She told me a good deal about herself. I know better than anybody else what she suffered. Physical pain was hers, and despair, and great mental anguish. She was tried in fire, and she emerged a white and shining soul. She gave me and mine all the joy that life has brought us. My daughters would have been homeless orphans but for her; as children they would have known only the inside of charitable institutions. She never had much strength, but she had indomitable spirit, and she breathed that spirit into me and into my girls. Mazie's little daughter is named not for me but for Evelyn and I would not have it otherwise. . . ."

The emptiness of hotel rooms had awaited him when he went back to them. That desolate afternoon and night he could not even now bring back to mind without a shudder. He had wanted never to see that weeping, wrinkled old woman again, had no wish to meet Mazie and the other daughter; he had shrunk from the thought of beholding the child named "Evelyn." A messenger the next day had carried his check and his explanation that important affairs called him peremptorily back to New York. Yet the thought of plunging so soon again into the swift current of his regular life, the ugly city streets, the well-ordered oak-ceiled office, Kipps, Jerry Haines, the tedious directors' meetings, the petty demands, the never-ending succession of decisions he was called upon to make, had been intolerable. He had planned a month's vacation,—a month when he should live his own life and be his own self,—a month without even Theodore's ministrations. He was not ready to return. He had escaped his prison, but there seemed to be no other place for him except its dark and gloomy walls once more. And then had come to him an inspiration: he would visit Vin Morrisey and perhaps on his way back to New York he would stop off at Canton and look up Jack

Cheney! Vin Morrisey and Jack Cheney! It was thirty years since he had seen either of them!

For some time he had been aware that Vin Morrisey had taken up his abode in the little Hopi village of Pootah in Arizona, near the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. Taylor Evans occasionally heard from him and had once visited Vin there with a party of tourist friends. His report had interested Sam. The relief he experienced as an early train the next day carried him away from Los Angeles was that of a fugitive, only he had not been able to put a name to the thing from which he fled.

§ 4

A racketing Ford, rusty, dilapidated, coated with alkali dust had borne him from the nearest railroad station across the sandy, cactus-studded fifteen miles to where the red blocks of Indian houses cut in the face of the sandstone cliffs marked the village of Pootah. There had followed a long weary climb to the broken tiled roof and dun-colored walls of a Mexican adobe dwelling and Morrisey. A weather-beaten man he had grown to be, seamy of face, his shock of thick hair reduced to a few locks that curled thickly about his ears, his skin burned deep by the sun, the lower part of his face hidden by a scraggly beard and a long drooping mustache. Sam did not know him at first. A curious contrast they must have presented, he thought now: himself, white of hair, sleek and trim, well-groomed, short and stocky, clad in golf hose, knickers, and straw hat, the product of New York, and that strange vagabond of furrowed countenance and flowing beard.

Sam remained four days with Morrisey and shared the same bed with him. In the morning they rose, cooked their own breakfast, sometimes rode the three miles to the brink of the great canyon, looked across the awesome chasm, gazed deep into its mysterious vitals, watched the red and purple shadows blend and change, and sometimes they moved no further from the house than the shaded pergola, which ran along one side of the adobe's walls, vine-twined and hung with clusters of peppers and a red-hued olla, rested their eyes on the age-old Hopi village at their feet and talked of life and of memories.

A strange character, Vin Morrisey,—always had been

strange, unsatisfactory, unsatisfied. He expounded many of his ardent faiths to Sam, but often his listener had found it hard to follow him, so weird and fantastic some of these seemed to be.

"I always wanted to find self-expression," he said; "I rebelled even as a boy from all that smacked of the pay envelope. I've tried my hand at everything, play acting, painting, punching cattle, and bossing Zulus. I've traveled the world over. I paint now, and I find satisfaction in that, but, thank God, I am not dependent upon selling what I create. Sometimes a tourist comes through here to watch the snake dances and sometimes one of my canvases finds a purchaser. But I have never sought one. Bella takes care of me. She has an income from her father, an old Mexican rascal living in Calexico. It is not munificent, but it is enough for us both. I am content to live upon her bounty for I give her all she wants in life, and I have my work.

"No," he continued as Sam interrupted with a question, "we are not married and never will be. We are companions and friends and that is better than being husband and wife. I have known many women,—Geisha girls and Kaffirs and I had a wife in the Marquesas when Ruggieri and I lived there. Lolo was the best of them all, but when she died I came away. . . . I've three children down there somewheres, and sometimes I think I will go back and perhaps finish up there. . . . But this suits me for the present. I like to paint. That's my story. I've tried all the arts, everything but music. Through one of them, I always have known I should find self-expression, and twenty years ago Ruggieri showed me it was painting. I never finish anything I begin; I never do. I'm afraid if I did people might want to buy my stuff, and all my life I have striven to avoid what that might come to mean to me. You see, art in this world is commercialized. A man is a great artist because of the price his pictures bring, he is a great musician by the size of his contract and the amount of money that is paid him each time he sings, he is a great writer by the number of copies sold of his books. Look at Taylor Evans,—a living example of just the thing I mean. Consider the trash he now dishes out to the public through the monthly magazines,—sex stuff, purposely salacious in order to make it spicy reading. Taylor started out to be an artist, a true artist. After his first book was published, he went to the woods of Maine and buried

himself in the wilderness in order to achieve another one as good. And then, of course, he wasn't big enough to stand a temporary failure. Look at him now! I came across an old New York paper one day a few months ago, and saw that Taylor had given a reading from his latest published novel, and that the hall was packed to the doors. There's success for you! You couldn't have persuaded one of his audience that Taylor wasn't a great author, for each had paid two dollars and a half to hear him read from his book, of which two hundred thousand copies had been sold. . . . Was Gauguin a greater artist after his work was discovered? No, you bet not."

"The thing fellows like you don't understand, Sam," he said on another hot afternoon under the vine-covered pergola, "is that for me just the act of painting is enough. I'm not a great artist. I never will be,—but I like to paint. It makes little difference to me whether or not anybody else likes my work. I enjoy painting for the fun of trying to catch something I see in my eye or my brain and transferring it in colors on to canvas. That's enough for me. I spend a whole day at some spot in the canyon or below there among my friends, the Hopis, and if I catch one thing I'm after, that's all I want. You, no doubt, fancy I lack ambition. You are wrong. My ambition is satisfied in capturing that something or other I'm trying to paint. It may be no more than a color value. But I am content and I come home here to Bella, who has a fine dish of enchilladas or frijoles waiting for me, and what more has life to offer?"

Sam had wanted to stay longer with Vin; the weird man with his weird ideas had a curious fascination for him, but Bella, who had been away for ten days at Calexico, was returning and there would have been no room for him after her arrival. So he lingered only long enough to meet her when the dusty auto stage brought her back, a swarthy, velvety-eyed creature with clinking gold earrings dangling from under straight raven black hair, and a look of distrust for the New Yorker in her dark deer-like orbs. Then he climbed into her vacant place in the dusty stage, waved, and lifted his hat as the heavy vehicle began to move. His last look of Vin was of a tall man in half-length boots, carelessly laced, folding in the bottoms of daubed and baggy corduroy trousers, a brown shirt open at the throat, his head bare, his long untrimmed locks lifting in

the wind, his gray beard straggling across his chest, a heavy pipe gripped between his strong teeth.

§ 5

Two days later came Sam's visit to Canton and the call he paid at the office of Dr. John A. Cheney. Here he found an eye-glassed country doctor, bald and gray, with a gentle benevolent expression that did not in any way suggest the vividly vital Jack Cheney he remembered. Doctor John Cheney, pottering about the small Ohioan city with his pills and powders! Thirty-five years of drudgery, and how little he had had to show for it!

First there was his crowded and odorous office on the second floor of a brick office building, an office filled with snuffling children and anxious shawled mothers waiting their turn to see the physician, an office of shabby furniture and a worn carpet, with an inverted bottle of drinking water and a stack of lily cups in one corner and a faded engraving of Rembrandt's "A Lesson in Anatomy" on the wall. And next there was his dented, lusterless Dodge sedan, that he drove himself, which had a dark stain of blood on the upholstery of the back seat. Lastly his frame double house sitting back from the elm-bordered street in an overgrown garden behind a rickety picket fence from which the white paint had curled and chipped.

The house and the ramshackle car appeared to be the sum of his worldy possessions. Perhaps he had made investments; it did not occur to Sam to ask. Jack, at the time, had only one thought: his daughter, Margaret, who had just completed her course at Johns Hopkins, had not only won her degree but a scholarship besides. She was to spend six months in study abroad. There were other children: young John, who had taken the second degree awarded by Harvard for a Doctor in Public Health, and who had gone to Brazil to fight the hookworm, another boy, Henry, who had died of the flu at Camp Dix, and still another who was then following in his brilliant sister's steps at Johns Hopkins. A fifth child, a daughter, had not as yet left home and to her, and to her mother, Sam was duly presented when on his first night he arrived at Jack's modest home for dinner. There was little in the crimped gray-haired, colorless, and flabby-cheeked Mrs. Cheney to re-

mind him of the pretty, flirtatious bride he remembered at the Chicago World's Fair thirty years before, hanging on her young husband's arm. She had grown into a rather sweet-faced woman, complacent, self-satisfied, dull, a housekeeper, an anxious, flurried wife and mother. She bored Sam with endless tales concerning her remarkable children and the remarkable things they had accomplished. He did not begrudge them these achievements, he applauded and approved, but they were young people he had never met, and ones in whom, admiring their father though he did, he could not bring himself to take much interest.

It was Jack with whom he wanted to talk. Jack with whom he wanted to discuss old times, Jack whose mind and heart, as these had grown to be, he was anxious to know and understand. But the opportunity to do this seemed persistently to evade him. At dinner, the telephone had thrice summoned the physician from the table, and finally had called him away for good. His rounds and office hours occupied him all the next day. The second evening was almost a repetition of the first. The two men had just composed themselves for a talk over cigars and coffee-cups when a white faced messenger appeared at the front door to say that "Mis' White had been took bad, and please to come at once." Sam waited until nearly midnight for Jack's return, nodding and jerking himself awake to listen to Mrs. Cheney's tiring accounts of her children's unusual endowments.

"Oh, it has been like this, all our lives," she said to Sam when he had complained that he had traveled far to see Jack and the prospect of a leisurely talk with him did not seem probable. "I used to protest a great deal at first. Jack was never home; I never had him to myself; there has never been anything like family life possible for us. He is constantly in demand; they want him here, there, and everywhere. It's been so ever since we married. Before Margaret came, I used to rebel. I remember once I hurt him terribly by telling him I hadn't married him just because I expected him to pay the rent. Poor Jack! I'm afraid I was good deal of a trial to him during those first years. After I had my baby, it wasn't so bad. I began to realize that he didn't belong to us but to them."

"Them?" Sam asked. "Who're 'them'?"

"The people,—the town folk here in Canton. Guess there

isn't a person anywheres 'round here that Jack hasn't 'tended one time or another. They all worship him. Why, you know, there're hundreds of families that think the world and all of him and wouldn't sign a deed or a contract without consulting him."

"But doesn't that seem to you a great waste of time for a man as clever and as big as Jack? I don't see what he gets out of it. It takes up all his energy. These people you speak of just make use of him. He doesn't get paid for handing out much of his advice, I'll bet. Any two-penny lawyer could do it just as well and there're always ministers to consult. Strikes me that Jack's thrown himself away on this small town. He was a brilliant young fellow, as I remember him; he had everything: youth, personality, charm, brains, and character. If Jack had wanted to, he could have become great; I mean 'great' in the sense of accomplishing big things; he could have become a great authority on medicine or a great surgeon. Instead he chose this."

On the last night of his stay, Sam made Jack promise to come round to his hotel when his work was finished no matter how late the hour, and on that occasion he had repeated to him what he had said to his wife. Jack took off his spectacles, and rubbed his tired eyes a moment or two, before answering.

"I don't see it that way, Sam," he said at length. "As a young man, I used sometimes to think that laboratory work was my forte, and I admit there have been times when I've regretted I didn't go in for it, but nothing could compensate me for my work here, Sam. As a physician, I'm rather rusty and old-fashioned, but it's a great thing to be beloved, Sam, deserve it though one may or not. And there are my children. I tell you I get much joy out of their lives and their work. Margaret is going to specialize in biology; that's what I should have liked to do, but I'm far from certain I should have accomplished as much as *she* will. . . . Oh, no-no-no,—I have no regrets. Only a profound thankfulness. . . . But tell me about yourself, Sam. You're quite remarkable, do you know that? I remember 'way back there in those early days in New York, I used to look at you and wonder what you were going to make of yourself. I used to wonder what chance a young clerk in a hardware store earning four or five dollars a week had in this big world without the equipment that fortunately was mine. But you knew better than any

of us what you were after; you had a goal definitely ahead of you, you struck straight for it, and how gloriously you have achieved! It would sound patronizing for me to say I'm proud of you,—but I am, old friend. It gives me quite a thrill sometimes to say I knew you intimately years ago,—that we were boys together. Now you have everything!"

§ 6

The sun had moved in its course until now a sharp angle of light feel directly across Sam's eyes. He kept hunching his chair into the shadow to avoid it, but the sunlight relentlessly pursued him.

Everything he wanted!

Yes, he had everything he wanted. He deserved to have everything he wanted, for he had worked for it; he had a right to success and he had made up his mind, a couple of years ago, that he was going to be one of those rich men who enjoyed success. So many of his acquaintances, who had built up great fortunes and great businesses, kept on devoting their energies to greater fortune and more business because they had nothing else to do. Freeman of the Cole, Hatten & Freeman Company,—a man many times a millionaire,—had once said that very thing to him; Harold Twyman of Ludlow & Co. had repeated it. They kept on working because they had formed the habit and could not stop. Well, it was to be different with him. The years that remained were not to be spent in a swivel-chair at an office desk, but in the enjoyment of his well-earned leisure and his wealth. He was through with business! He had taken the bulk of his money and invested it where the ups and downs of the market could not affect it. Kipps and Jerry Haines could do his worrying for him. More money did not interest him; if he made more he would have to think up ways to spend it or hire somebody to do the thinking for him.

Jack's diagnosis of him was right. He had set his mind forty years ago at a definite goal,—he had begun even before that!—and he had gone straight for it without deviation, and he had obtained it. He had not been satisfied with half measures as were so many men. Fellows like Vin Morrisey frittered away their talents. He reviewed his old friends: Jack,

Taylor, Ritter, Ruth, Evelyn, and Matt,—Matt whom of them all in later years, he had learned most to love,—Matt, who had come closer to being his one intimate than any other individual, man or woman,—Matt, whose return from Warsaw two years after the war, he had so eagerly awaited, Matt, who had been in charge of the relief work in that Polish city and who on the very eve of his homecoming had been stricken with encephalitis! Matt was gone,—all of the old crowd that had begun life so hopefully was gone, gone, at least, for him. One by one he thought of them, and of their lives as they had lived them. Well, perhaps, Ruth, Vin, and Jack had found satisfaction, and maybe Evelyn had too, but what they had achieved would never have contented him; he had no desire to paint unfinished pictures, convert heathens to Christianity, nor potter about a small Ohioan town writing prescriptions and advising poor people how to invest their money. He wouldn't change places with any of them. No, his wealth perhaps had not brought him everything he had fancied it would, but he had security. There was the comforting thought that caressed his mind: security! None of the others knew it. And along with security, was power. Power! Money meant that and meant respect too. They could pass out their pills, hymn books, and they could daub away at their canvases if they liked. He envied none of them.

§ 7

The sunlight stole after him. He draped the newspaper over his head and settled himself more comfortably in the chair. Beneath the warmed sheet of news, presently, he must have dozed, for a brisk step on the flagged terrace aroused him with a start. It was Paula, tall, slim, beautifully dressed in white serge, with a rakish white hat pulled over one eye, white ankles, white feet. She had the manner and carriage of a woman of forty.

"What's up?" Sam asked sleepily. He had perspired a little about the neck and he thought in disgust he would be obliged to go upstairs and get Theodore to bring him a fresh collar.

"My luncheon. You haven't forgotten!"

"No-no, I won't be here. I saw the hat; thought maybe you were going out."

"Justine had no time for my hair this morning. Where are you lunching?"

"At the Club, probably."

"Osgood——"

"My God, Paula, when we're alone, can't you call me 'Sam'!"

She shrugged elaborately.

"Well, I want you to be sure to give Sylvia a message. She went over there this morning with the Pitchell boy. She must be here at three-thirty exactly, and she must look her best. Tell her I want her to be casual; the child understands. Mrs. Cadwallader ought to be ready to go about that time. I can hold her till then at any rate. I wish you'd drop in about the same time, too, Sam; it would really help a lot. You never met Mr. Cadwallader in business, did you?"

"Only heard of him."

"He's Piping Rock, isn't he?"

"Believe so."

"You never run into him in the city?"

"He doesn't belong to my clubs."

"Well, don't have it on your mind, but if you *shouldn't* play golf and you should saunter in about half past three, it would be lovely."

Sam grunted, heaved himself up, and went to find Theodore and a fresh collar. When he came downstairs a few minutes later, he paused a moment by the radio set in the library, but it was the Bible reading and he hastily shut off. The dining-room showed the luncheon table sweet with early spring blooms, checkered with squares of exquisite lace, glittering with silver and crystal goblets,—twelve places for twelve fragrant ladies who in less than an hour would fill the beautifully appointed room with a babble of high-pitched voices. Wilbur the butler, James the second butler, and a maid would file about the table deferentially proffering at the left elbow one epicurean and tastefully garnished delicacy after another. And all this, because Paula wanted an invitation to a certain dance for Sylvia,—Sylvia who would have infinitely preferred to be lassoing cattle on a Montana beef ranch. . . . Paula was a damn fool, but her husband presumed she knew what she was about. In any case, he did not care.

§ 8

There was an unusual number of people at the Club; the porches, lounge, and luncheon rooms were gay and noisy. Sam remembered it was the day for the finals of the handicap tournament. He looked around for his son and daughter, but neither was in evidence. Right and left, people nodded to him as he mounted the steps and he fancied there was a little buzz of whispering. He avoided people's eyes; it was a nuisance to have to bow so frequently, and he could not have told the names of half the people that saluted him. When the head waiter brought him a menu, he studied it carefully, and when he growled his criticism, the man smirked, squirmed, and said something about the House Committee.

"Oh, damn the House Committee," Sam said sourly. "If the members had any sense they'd kick, and then we'd get some decent service. A steam table's the devil's invention for spoiling good food. . . . Bring me some eggs,—omelet with fine herbs,—and, by the Lord God, if you take it *near* that steam table, I'll murder you!"

"Yes, Mr. Smith; very good, Mr. Smith; just as you say, sir. . . . And a French pastry to follow, Mr. Smith?"

Sam considered, frowning, pursing his lips.

"No," he said resignedly, "bring me a raw apple . . . as usual."

He went down to the locker room where the service bar was located. A club attendant here waited on members who furnished their own liquor. A knot of men, Sam knew, were congregated about the counter.

"Hello, Sam!" "'Morning, Mr. Smith!" "Hope to-day finds you well, sir."

He ordered a little bicarbonate of soda in half a glass of water. The indigestion from his breakfast coffee had passed, but the soda would prevent his luncheon from playing any distressing tricks. The voices of the men rose about him.

"There's the three dollars you owe me for the three holes, and then the dollar for the best ball, and five on the match. Buddy owes me six, you owe nine, I owe Gibbsie nine, you owe Buddy six,—we all come out even!"

"Get Mr. Smith here to figure it out for you; *he's* a financier."

Sam wiped his lips carefully and restored his handkerchief to his breast pocket.

"No," he said, running a large palm over his abdomen, "you figure it out to suit yourselves. I'm through with golf. Too much fuss, too much arguing, too much dressing and undressing,—too much damn hiking, if you ask me. I leave the pleasing pastime to you young fellows to wrangle over."

Laughter ran around the group. They moved a little to one side as he turned to leave them and mount the stairs, several following him with their eyes.

Jaspar Metcalf encountered him in the lounge room. Metcalf, who was one of the Board of Governors, immediately led him into a corner.

"We must have that property, Sam,—the Club can't afford to let it slip into anybody else's hands. Some real estate speculators want it to cut up into small lots for workmen's cottages; I don't know exactly what the scheme is, but I heard they plan to build about a hundred of these miserable four-room shacks. That would just about spell our ruin! Can you imagine what a lot of kids and slatternly women streaming across the links would do to the course? Well, now, I just leave it to you,—wouldn't it be fierce? I tell you, Sam, the Club's *got* to have that piece and they've *got* to have it at once. Frankle's asking two hundred and twenty thousand for it. Underwrite us for half the amount! Go on, Sam,—that's a good fellow. I'll guarantee to raise the balance, but let me tell the boys you've put yourself down for half. . . . Look, here, Sam, I know how you feel about the presidency, but I suspect your missus would be pleased. . . ."

Metcalf hurried on, pouring out a stream of argument and persuasion, but Sam was not listening. He was thinking that it must be tiresome to be associated in business with such a talkative person; the men who worked for him must hate him. Suddenly, he caught the eye of the head waiter looking for him.

"Sorry, Jaspar, I've got to go."

"But Sam, what'll I tell the boys?"

"See you by and by; my lunch's waiting."

"But Sam,"—Metcalf held on to him forcibly,—"what about it?"

"My lunch . . ."

"Oh, hang your lunch."

"Oh, my God! . . . What the devil do you want? Hundred and ten thousand? Sure put me down. That's all right. I don't care. Sure put me down, but I've got to go; my lunch is waiting."

Damn Metcalf—and damn everybody in general. One and all of them were forever hooking him for contributions. Give here—give there—give everywhere. Who wanted to be president of the damn Club? It would only mean a lot of work and a lot of responsibility,—and he had been doing nothing else these last few years but try to sidestep both.

He ate alone by a curtained window, a weekly illustrated paper propped up before him. Voices close at hand presently obtruded upon his thoughts. Through the closed window beside his table he saw two young people lounging on a settee, their backs to the club house wall, within a foot or so of his car. It was the Cadwallader girl, and Peter Thurston's son.

"Mother's lunching with Mrs. Osgood Smith. Have you seen their place at Sands Point? It's perfectly lovely."

"I've been there a couple of times with Sylvia."

"Mother says she knows Mrs. Osgood Smith is angling for a Junior League invitation for Sylvia."

"Is she likely to get it?"

"Well, Sylvia's kind of peculiar,—but it isn't that. It's Mrs. Osgood Smith herself, I imagine, that's the trouble. You know she's half Jewish."

"Why, I *never knew that!*"

"Didn't you?"

"I never *dreamed* it! . . . Is it generally known?"

"Can't say. Her father was Julius Faber. I heard Dad talking about it the other day."

"She's a mighty fine-looking woman, just the same."

"Well, looks have nothing to do with it. The Junior League is the Junior League and Mother has to draw the line somewheres. If a girl makes the League then almost automatically she's invited to the Metropolitans."

"Is Mr. Osgood Smith awfully rich?"

"Rich? Why say, he's just *rolling* in money. Gee, I wish I had as much as he has! . . . What would you do if you had all the money he's got?"

"Oh . . . guess I'd buy a classy ninety h. p. roadster and chase myself 'cross country and give Hollywood the O. O."

"That wouldn't be much."

"Well, then I'd get myself all dolled up in snappy clothes and buzz over to Paris and bust that old town wide open. . . . Say, do you think your mother will hand out that bid to Sylvia?"

"What's your sudden interest? Thinking of proposing, are you?"

"Might! . . . Seriously, what's your mother likely to do?"

"Oh, she'll come through all right. There's the Cathedral Fund, you know, Mother's interested in! . . . Ha-ha."

"And Sylvia'll get her bid?"

"Surrre."

"Well, I'm glad. She's a nice kid, but, oh God! she's noisy!"

§ 9

Sam's mind was suddenly diverted. One of the Club's uniformed attendants bent deferentially at his elbow.

"Mr. Smith,—on the long distance 'phone, sir. They're holding the call for you."

"Who is it?"

"Your secretary, I believe, sir."

A moment later he found himself in a stuffy, cigar-scented booth.

"What is it, Kipps? I can't hear."

"Haussmann,—Haussmann's dead, sir. I thought maybe you'd wish to know."

"Who? Abner Haussmann?"

"Yes, sir."

Silence.

"Well, that's too bad. Send flowers, you know, Kipps,—condolences. You'll handle the matter for me."

"Don't concern yourself, sir, everything's been attended to."

"Good."

"There's one other matter, sir: St. Cloud University wants to confer a degree on you."

"A what?"

"A degree. They are very anxious to know as soon as possible if you'd accept."

"What they want? A new library or something?"

An appreciative titter in answer.

"Tell 'em I can't be bothered."

"Oh, but Mr. Smith! An LL.D.?"

"You tell 'em that every red cent I'm going to give away for educational purposes before I die and after I die goes to the institution that bears my own name. If after you're satisfied they understand that thoroughly, they still persist in wishing a degree on me, I'll accept with pleasure. . . . But they won't!"

"Very good, sir. . . . Will you be up this week?"

"Not if I can help it."

"Important matters're coming up."

"Well, *you* decide 'em."

" 'Fraid I can't, sir. Mr. Haines says——"

"You tell Mr. Haines to go to the devil."

"Then shall I come down, sir? Thursday? Wednesday? Any day you say, Mr. Smith."

"Kipps, if I see your cadaverous face 'round my place this week, I'll shoot you at sight!"

Another chuckle.

" 'Fraid I'll have to risk it, sir."

"Well, come any day you like. I'll be fooling 'round here somewheres. Hate to make dates; get me?"

"Yes, sir, I understand."

"Say, Kipps . . ."

"Yes, Mr. Smith."

"Who's that you just said was dead?"

"Haussmann,—Abner Haussmann."

"Oh, yes, I remember, now. Well, send flowers, condolences, everything, you know."

"Yes, sir, I've done all that already."

"All right. Good-bye."

§ 10

He turned back to his lunch. Under the impression that he had finished, the waiter had cleared the table. Sam swore. He deliberated whether or not he should make a scene. Then he shrugged his shoulders. Words, explanations, apologies, the fuss and wait! . . . It was too much. He could enjoy his cigar now, at any rate. The ones he had carried in his pocket all morning had become slightly frayed, so he tossed them aside and purchased fresh ones. But the smoke did not

satisfy him. It tasted dry and flat, and was fragrantless. Strolling out on the porch, he watched the exciting finish of a match on the eighteenth hole. It struck him as inexpressibly silly.

Presently he began to wonder what had become of Sylvia and John. Starting on a round of exploration, he consulted the caddy master. Both their bags were in their lockers, and no one had seen either on the links. Nor was there sign of them among the tennis players or about the club house. He began to grow annoyed. There was Paula's message to deliver, and it suddenly came to him that he wanted to go home and listen in on his radio. There was an interesting program that afternoon, he remembered. A chance encounter with Dwiggins sent him toward the garage and here he found his daughter sitting in one of those toy automobiles,—a one-seated Ford with a cut-down body, painted bright red,—regulating the spark and gas throttles, while a youth in a shirt once white, tinkered with its engine. An array of tools lay scattered on the ground.

"Hello, Daddy," drawled Sylvia at sight of her father; "Violet's lost some of her pep and Spike's trying to locate the trouble."

Sam sauntered near and looked on.

"There's something wrong with her gas feed, sir," the young man observed emerging from under the engine hood.

"Why don't you get Dwiggins to help you?" Sam suggested.

"Thought we could do it ourselves."

A moment later an abrupt burst of energy on the part of the diminutive car justified this faith. Sylvia and Spike shouted directions at one another while the engine roared. The noise hurt Sam's head; he was obliged to wait. Presently the din lessened and Spike commenced to gather up his tools. The message from the girl's mother was delivered and Sam turned away. John evidently had left the Club; at any rate, his father decided he would waste no further time looking for him. He was eager to slip away and amuse himself with his radio. There was a set in his library upstairs at home; he could ascend by the back stairs without encountering any of his wife's guests and have a thoroughly enjoyable two hours. The atmosphere looked very clear to-day; it would be interesting to see what he could pick up; only the day before he had gotten WDAF at Kansas City and WMC at Memphis.

An odd-looking child, Sylvia, he thought, as he moved through the lines of marguerite bushes that bordered the path back to the club house. Bobbed of hair, with a huge ever-grinning mouth that frankly displayed at every word and expression, rows of flashing white, even teeth. The perfection of the teeth had been Paula's work; for years the girl had worn ugly gold bands about them, and had been a constant visitor at the dentist's. She was not unattractive however; there was a certain healthy boldness about her which was far from being displeasing, but she had no lure, no charm, and there was hardly a trace of femininity in her entire make-up. Boys liked her because she was like themselves. She smoked cigarettes with deep inhalation, sometimes swore, and,—her father suspected,—drank whatever was offered her. Paula did not approve of young girls touching anything intoxicating, but Sam was nevertheless confident that Sylvia did entirely as she pleased about this matter. Wilbur, the butler, had once reported to him that the closet in the hall just outside the dining-room, which he kept under lock and key, had been broken into, and that a bottle of high-proof brandy was missing. Sam had had very little doubt whose the pilfering hand had been, but Sylvia had resolutely disclaimed all knowledge of the theft. What had particularly distressed him in connection with this incident was that the brandy was exceptionally fine, very old, and he had only three bottles of it left. His daughter's morals and conduct, however, he left to his wife's direction; he was frank to admit that the girl baffled him.

§ 11

He was repeatedly delayed in trying to leave the Club. Several people came up to speak to him. Mrs. Jukes wanted him to meet her son, Geoffry, who had just graduated from college and was looking for a business opening in New York. "Not bonds," Mrs. Jukes had insisted; "anything but bonds, Mr. Smith." Then Moffett had begged hard to have him make a fourth at bridge; "little ten-cent game," Moffett had urged; "we don't want any pikers." A man, whose name Sam did not remember, implored him for a word in private: "What was going to happen to steel? Did he think she was going up or down?" Lewisohn hurried after him just as he

was climbing into his car with the news that "the little deal we're in is liable to turn out to be a corker, Mr. Smith,—just a hundred per cent profits!" "What deal?" Sam had asked; he didn't recall any deal with Lewisohn. "Why you know that shipping deal, Mr. Smith; each of us went into it fifty-fifty." "Ah, yes," Sam answered, appearing to be enlightened although he still had no recollection of the matter. "Well, sir," Lewisohn whispered impressively, leaning in through the car's open door, "you're just about going to double your money." "That's fine," Sam said without enthusiasm. He was thinking of his radio. At four o'clock, if he remembered rightly, Jim Humes' Minstrels came on.

It was a few minutes after that hour before he reached "Merrywold." The luncheon was over, the guests gone. He caught a glimpse of Paula sauntering down near the water's edge at the end of the lawn with a young Frenchman, Henri Something-or-other, whom she had recently annexed. Paula always had half-a-dozen young men in tow now, but she kept her enthusiasms much better under control and a number of mild flirtations simmered along simultaneously. None of these romantic young men ever seemed the least bit attracted to her hoydenish daughter. When Sylvia married, her father used to think with satisfaction, it would be no fortune hunter that would be her husband. She would choose her own mate, propose to him herself if necessary, and march him to the altar.

§ 12

A noise on the terrace drew him to the door just as he was about to ascend to his library. On the lower steps sat his son, frowning over a book, and in his lap lay the head and shoulders of the miserable cur whose foul paws earlier in the day had soiled Sam's white flannels. One of the boy's hands was fondling the animal, scratching its head and idly playing with its ears.

Sam flung open the screen door and strode out upon the terrace.

"Where did you get that damn dog? He's a rotten cur, a foul, a disgusting animal. Get him out of here,—drive him out,—I won't have him on the place."

"But Dad——"

"Hear what I tell you, John? I'll give you two minutes to get rid of him."

The puppy leered up at Sam out of rheumy eyes, lapped a red tongue, and flopped its tail.

"Dad,—*please.*"

"John, I won't listen. The dog's no good. If you want a dog, go buy one. Get a pedigreed Airedale or a Police dog. They're the kind of dogs for a boy."

"But Dad, this one's hurt. He ran out in the road as I was driving home and I knocked him over; I couldn't get out of the way."

"There doesn't seem to be a thing the matter with him."

"Well, I don't think he *was* much injured," the boy admitted; "only he's sort of affectionate and friendless. Guess nobody's ever been kind to him."

"Send him to a veterinary, if you like, pay his board and anything else you want,—but don't keep him 'round here. I won't have him. He's a disgusting animal."

"Couldn't I take him back to college with me?"

"Certainly not."

Sam returned angrily to the house and mounted to his library. It took him a moment or two to throw off his irritation. His jaw was still tightly shut as he adjusted the earpiece of his radio about his head and began to tune in.

Bzzzzzzzz—stack—ack—ack—crack—crack—

There came a knock at the door. It was Wilbur.

"Mr. Haines on the 'phone, sir. He's been calling up two or three times. Couldn't locate you at the Club. He says it's important, sir."

Sam jerked the metal circle from his head and swore under his breath.

"You tell Mr. Haines to call up later. I can't be disturbed, now. Tell him I'm engaged in something important, myself."

"I've been trying to get at this damn thing all day," Sam grumbled to himself as Wilbur withdrew and closed the door. "God! One would think I couldn't do as I liked!"

But there was something wrong with the mechanism before which he sat. Bzzzzzzzz—stack—ack-ack—crack—crack—was all that he could get from it.

Once more with an angry gesture, he wrenched the earpiece from his head. Some of his white hairs caught in it, but with a jerk and a wince he pulled it free. There were two

other radio sets downstairs in the main library; either was better than his own. He went cautiously into the hall and listened over the banisters. He could catch no murmur of conversation from below; the library was empty, and he hurried down, hunched himself up to the radio cabinet and began to twist the discs. The whining strains of a violin and the tinkling accompaniments of a piano, far distant, at once made themselves heard. Cautiously, he turned the dials; a man's voice speaking distinctly told him that the Melody Quartette would now render "Old Kentucky Babe." Sam experimented. Thin accents out of the ether announced: "WMAG, Chicago. Whitney's Band, the overture from 'William Tell' by Rossini."

Suddenly breaking in upon him from the outside came a jar of noise. Sylvia burst into the room brandishing something in her hand, a flash of skirts and two young men in her wake. The hubbub was frightful. They were all shouting and striving to take from her what she flourished.

"Sylvia!"

Instant silence,—a hasty scramble to decorum.

"Excuse me, Dad; we didn't see you."

"My God,—it's a wonder you wouldn't look. This is no place for a wrestling match. Get out of doors where you belong."

"Dad . . ."

"What d'you want? Can't you see I'm trying to listen. Just got Chicago. . . . Want to hear me pick up Hastings, Nebraska, or Dallas, Texas? I can do it in a second. Want to see me?"

"Dad,—just a minute. . . ."

"Well, what d'you want?"

"Do you know anything about this? Did you ever see it before? Mother says it never belonged to her. We've been wondering where it came from."

Sam looked at the thing that dangled in her hand. It was a doll, tattered, ragged, disintegrating.

"What is it?"

"It's a rag doll."

"Where did you get it?"

"Oh, upstairs in an old trunk. We were rummaging 'round for costumes for the fancy dress party to-night."

"What else did you find there?"

"Nothing. Just some old clothes."

"Let's see what it is."

He took the limp effigy in his hands, gazed at its faded inked features, the bit of red silk still tied bandit-fashion about its head. A wave of old and forgotten emotion rose in him; it swelled—swelled—thinned—dwindled—was gone.

"Can I have it, Daddy? Is it yours? You don't want it, do you? We're having such fun with it,—playing indoor baseball."

For a moment the man frowned, pressing his lips close. The vision of a room rose before him,—a mantel,—Mehitabel careening on its side. That, too, evaporated. Nothing remained. He tossed the rag puppet to his daughter.

"Sure, take it. . . . I've no use for it. There's no sense in keeping such things. I don't care any more. But, for Heaven's sakes,—make your game *outside* baseball, will you? Don't play in the house."

They rushed toward the door, laughter breaking out again, but he arrested them suddenly with a command. At the sharp note in his voice, they paused. Sam's attention was all on the radio, and the signal that reached him through the receivers.

"Stop—listen. . . ."

"What is it, Dad?"

"*Wait*—I tell you. Stop talking there."

The voices hushed, low murmuring continued; there rose a half suppressed giggle.

"*Silence,* I tell you. I can't hear. . . . They're signing off until further announcement. There's an S.O.S. call. . . . I can hear the signal. . . . S.O.S. . . . I can hear it distinctly. Maybe it's a ship. . . . S.O.S. . . ."

"Why, 'S.O.S.' are *your* initials, Daddy," shrilled Sylvia.

"Be quiet, I tell you. It's an S.O.S. . . . somebody in distress. . . ."

THE END

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